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# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

**7954**th meeting
Tuesday, 30 May 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

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| *President*: | Mr. Rosselli | (Uruguay) |
| *Members*: | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Llorentty Soliz |
| | China | Mr. Shen Bo |
| | Egypt | Mr. Aboulatta |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | France | Mrs. Gueguen |
| | Italy | Mr. Cardi |
| | Japan | Mr. Bessho |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Umarov |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Safronkov |
| | Senegal | Mr. Seck |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skau |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Fesko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Rycroft |
| | United States of America | Mr. Klein |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in the Middle East**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen; Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Ms. Radhya Al-Mutawakel, of the Mwatana Organization For Human Rights.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

**Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed** (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you very much, Sir, for the opportunity to brief the Council on the latest developments in the Yemeni peace process.

Tragically, the violence continues on numerous fronts, deepening the suffering of the Yemeni people. Much of the violence has focused on the western coastline of Taiz governorate, where pro-Government forces are attempting to make progress from Al-Dhubab and Al-Mokha towards Hudaydah port and inland towards Taiz city. An assessment mission carried out by humanitarian agencies in early April found that Al-Dhubab town was largely empty due to widespread destruction of infrastructure and contamination by unexploded ordnance and landmines. In Al-Mokha town, an estimated 40 per cent of houses and infrastructure have been damaged by the fighting.

Violence has also continued in Hajjah governorate and the border area between Yemen and Saudi Arabia. There has been a significant escalation of violence in Taiz, including intensified shelling from 21 to 23 May by forces allied with Ansar Allah and Ali Abdullah Saleh, leading to the deaths and injury of tens of civilians and significant damage to civilian infrastructure in the city. The shelling of civilian areas and civilian infrastructure is a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

Air strikes have hit numerous other locations in the country. On 29 March, an air strike in Saada governorate reportedly killed 12 civilians, including several children. In addition, ballistic missiles were fired into Saudi territory. The persistent military action is leading to an increased militarization of the Yemeni population, the extensive proliferation of weapons and widespread use of deadly landmines. The terrible scenes witnessed on the west coast and other areas of the country show yet again how the conflict is laying waste to the civilian population, its homes and livelihoods. The parties must urgently come together to prevent the deepening of the catastrophic situation.

I will not hide the fact that we are nowhere close to reaching a comprehensive agreement from the Council. The reluctance of the key parties to embrace the concessions needed for peace, or even discuss them, remains extremely troubling. Yemenis are paying a price for their needless delay.

As the holy month of Ramadan begins, we must remember that 7 million Yemenis are at risk of famine unless the conflict ends. A quarter of Yemenis cannot afford food on the local market. Half of Yemen's population lacks access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene services, thereby increasing the risk of infectious diseases. The most recent outbreak of cholera has led to more than 500 deaths and over 60,000 suspected cases in 19 governorates. The rapid spread of the disease has been aggravated by an inadequate health-care system. Fewer than 45 per cent of medical facilities are functioning and medicines for diabetes, hypertension, cancer and other chronic diseases are in short supply. As the World Health Organization has underlined, Yemenis are dying not just from violence; the violence, lack of salaries and the loss of their livelihoods prevents them from receiving the basic treatment they need to survive.

So far, we have managed to avert military action in Al Hudaydah. The spread of fighting to the city would lead to a devastating loss of civilian life and infrastructure. It would threaten the flow of food and medical supplies through the port and bring further suffering to the Yemeni people. I made it clear to the parties during my recent meetings with the Government of Yemen and with political leaders in Sana'a that they must reach a compromise on the situation in Al

Hudaydah, in order to prevent such a horrific scenario. I regret that the delegation of Ansar Allah and the General People's Congress in Sana'a did not meet with me to discuss the framework for such an agreement.

My proposal, which includes security, economic and humanitarian elements, would allow for the continued flow of commercial and humanitarian supplies and ensure the end of any diversion of customs revenues and taxes so that they could be used to support salaries and services rather than the war or for personal benefit. Agreement between the parties on those issues will safeguard the population of Al Hudaydah against further harm and preserve commercial and humanitarian supply chains and the payment of salaries.

I have proposed an agreement that would prevent military clashes in Al Hudaydah and should be negotiated in parallel with an agreement to ensure the resumption of salary payments nationally to all civil servants. The lack of salary payments is driving millions of Yemenis into destitution. Such an agreement would require mechanisms to ensure that all State revenues, whether collected in Al Hudaydah, Sana'a, or elsewhere, are used in support of salary payments and the preservation of essential Government services in all areas of the country. I call on all parties to engage with me, without delay, on the basis of my proposal. Salary payments are possible only through an agreement between the Yemeni parties. It requires cooperation and negotiations about the use of existing resources in the country rather, than the scapegoating of the United Nations.

In parallel with efforts to avoid destructive conflict, we must also preserve systems that can serve the Yemeni people now and in the future. I am grateful to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the World Bank for organizing a conference to discuss urgent measures to support Yemen's economy and State institutions, as well as its longer-term recovery and reconstruction. I praise the work of the World Bank, UNICEF and local Yemeni institutions in restarting cash assistance to the poorest families through existing distribution social safety mechanisms. Such mechanisms will be a vital boost for household purchasing power and will help millions of Yemenis keep their children out of the growing ranks of the malnourished.

Commercial importers currently lack access to the financing required to sustain imports of essential goods, in particular during the holy month of Ramadan. I welcome efforts to create a trade finance facility that will allow commercial importers access to the hard currency that they need in order to pay for imports. That will ensure the continued availability of key commodities in Yemeni markets and will prevent the degradation of supply chains, allowing for more rapid economic recovery in the long term. That effort is just a part of a dynamic and innovative collaboration between the World Bank and the United Nations, which is unprecedented in scale and in the rapidity of its deployment. I am confident that it is having a positive impact today on the lives of Yemenis and will help to ensure a more rapid and stable recovery following the conflict.

The prospect of economic recovery and stability is still a distant prospect for most Yemenis and the country continues to be fertile ground for extremist groups. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula operations have persisted in several governorates, including Hadramout, Aden, Al-Dhali, Ma'reb and Shabwa. The absence of stability, economic opportunity and rule of law means that Yemen will continue to be a haven for such groups unless there is lasting peace.

I would like to express my deep concern regarding recent reports from Yemen of efforts to suppress and undermine the work of journalists, human rights activists and civil society, including harassment, beatings, arbitrary detention and trials without due process. I am particularly worried by the sentencing to death of Yahya Al-Jubayhi, a prominent Yemeni journalist, by a court run by the Houthis and General People's Congress on 12 April. I am also concerned by the arbitrary arrest and threats to the safety of members of the Baha'i community. The parties must uphold their obligation to respect the integrity of civil society and allow such actors to carry out their valuable work without fear of threat or intimidation. They must also allow religious minorities to live without fear of persecution.

I must highlight the important and effective role that Yemeni women continue to play in resolving conflict and in contributing to the vision for lasting peace and reconciliation, despite the atmosphere of violence and increasing risks to their safety. During my visit to Sana'a, I had the pleasure of meeting representatives of the Yemeni Women Pact for Peace and Security, which brings together Yemeni women from different political parties, as well as independent members of civil society. The meetings, which were convened by UN-

Women, discussed issues that are central to the current conflict in Yemen, including the economic crisis, political deadlock and the possibility of preventing an attack against Al Hudaydah. The members discussed mechanisms to increase women's inclusion in the peace negotiations and the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Yemeni women, civil society and political leaders have also been meeting regularly in discussions on the peace process and the future of the transition. I am very grateful for the efforts of Germany and the Berghof Foundation for hosting the events that will help Yemenis build consensus on their way to a return to a peaceful, orderly transition that meets the aspirations of Yemen's people.

During the past two months, the demands of the southern governorates for greater autonomy have become more prominent. Such calls demonstrate once again the urgent need for a peace agreement so that Yemenis can engage in discussions to finalize the Constitution, agree on a framework for addressing past injustices and prepare for the election of a Government that puts the country on the path towards recovery and prosperity. Yemenis across the country have been worn out by the conflict.

My meeting with an inspiring group of youth activists in Sana'a last week reminded me of the great Yemeni hopes for political transition before the war. The hopes of those young women and men for the resolution of issues have been ignored for too long. We discussed the political and security challenges facing Yemen, as well as the cholera outbreak. In my discussions with those members of civil society, women and youth groups proposed very practical ideas, including opening the Sana'a airport for civilian flights and urgent demands for the thousands of students and Yemenis requiring urgent medical treatment throughout the country. The demands of those young people are just, logical, inspiring and practical.

I very much regret to inform the Council that the call for peace from Yemeni women, civil society and the international community is still falling on deaf ears. An agreement on Al Hudaydah and salaries should represent a first step towards a national cessation of hostilities and renewed discussions on a comprehensive agreement. Yet, serious negotiations on those first steps have been slow to start.

I am deeply concerned by the attack on my convoy while traveling from the airport to the United Nations compound on 22 May. Such an incident cannot be ignored, and I call on the local authorities to conduct a full and transparent investigation into the attack and hold those responsible for the attack to account. Despite its gravity, it has increased my determination to continue with my efforts to fmd a negotiated political settlement that best serves the interests of the Yemeni people.

I urge the Council to strongly convey to the parties that they need to engage immediately with the United Nations to agree on steps to avoid further bloodshed, halt the slide towards famine and recommit to a peaceful end to the war. The humanitarian crisis and the threat of famine are entirely man-made. If the conflict stops, then Yemenis and their partners in the international community will have the capacity and the will to rebuild the country. With the unified backing of the international community, the path towards peace has been clearly laid out for the parties involved.

I take this opportunity to remind this Council of the thousands of Yemenis who have lost their lives for no other reason than paying the price of a war between their leaders. I would also like to remind the Council of the millions of Yemeni victims affected by man-made hunger, violence and famine. I appeal to the parties to stop fighting for power and instead to strive to build a country that respects the rights of all its citizens — a country with a prosperous economy and strong institutions for all Yemenis just as Yemenis deserve.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Ahmed for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

**Mr. O'Brien** (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen for his briefing, with which I completely align.

The people of Yemen are being subjected to deprivation, disease and death as the world watches. That is not an unforeseen or coincidental result of forces beyond our control. It is a direct consequence of actions of the parties and supporters of the conflict. It is also sadly a result of inaction, due to inability or indifference, by the international community.

As I have previously briefed the Council in recent months, urgent action is required in order to end the suffering. Yet, based on facts and, as ever, in complete

candour, I return to the Council to report that the situation on the ground has continued to spiral towards total social, economic and institutional collapse. Yemen now has the ignominy of being the world's largest food security crisis, with more than 17 million people who are food insecure, 6.8 million of whom are one step away from famine. Crisis is not coming. It is not looming. It is here today, on our watch. Ordinary people are paying the price.

Worse still, the threat of famine is driven and exacerbated by conflict. Yemen is not facing a drought. If there were no conflict in Yemen, there would be no descent into famine, misery, disease and death. A famine would certainly be avoidable and averted. We all know that there will be no military solution. And for as long as it takes until a political solution is found, we will continue as humanitarians to do everything in our power in order to avert the famine in Yemen, despite the challenges to our operations by all sides and their supporters.

While the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism has facilitated the transfer of over 7.6 million metric tons of goods through Yemen's Red Sea ports, of which 3.8 million metric tons were food, people's ability to buy food is diminishing. We are working hard to enhance the Mechanism and get it funded. In particular, governorates in which active fighting and airstrikes continue, such as Taiz, Hajjah, Sa'ada, Al-Jawf and Marib, remain affected by high and rising prices of commodities. The prices of red beans and wheat flour were 59 per cent and 29 per cent higher in April than they were pre-crisis. The economy is collapsing, employment has all but disappeared, food and fuel prices have skyrocketed and severe disruptions to fishing and agricultural production continue. The bottom line is that what food there is is largely unaffordable to the vast majority of the population, especially the most vulnerable, such as the 2 million people who remain internally displaced.

It is not just the food security situation. The institutional capacity of Yemen to respond to the basic needs of the population is crumbling, exacerbated by the failure of the Central Bank, following its move from Sanna'a to Aden, to operate in the interests of the people it is intended to serve. All parties to the conflict in Yemen have proven their continued inability to put the genuine needs of the Yemeni people first. The health-care system is a shell of what it once was, with half of all health facilities now closed. People are dying because even basic medical treatment, which we would take for granted, is no longer available. By the time I finish my statement to the Council today, another child in Yemen will have died from a preventable disease.

Over 1 million civil servants have not been paid for months, which has affected more than 8 million people and pushed more and more families towards poverty and starvation. Families are increasingly marrying off their young daughters in order to have someone else care for them. They often use the dowry to pay for basic necessities. While humanitarians have been working to assist the poorest of the poor, it is now also professionals, such as university professors, who are asking for food assistance. As the crisis continues, pressure on already scarce humanitarian resources will increase and survival for Yemenis will become harder. It will be difficult for Yemen to recover.

The strain being placed upon the all-too-fragile Yemeni system became all too evident in the past month, with the extensive, desperate resurgence of cholera. The debilitated health system took longer to detect cholera warning signs because the health workers who would normally have been maintaining disease surveillance systems were not paid. Water and sanitation systems were not functioning, owing to lack of fuel and basic maintenance, leaving more than 8 million people without access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

The combination of the rainy season and the uncollected rubbish that has piled up in the streets of large cities has created the perfect conditions for the rapid spread of communicable and water-borne diseases. In the past month alone, twice as many people are suspected of being cholera cases compared to those in the last six months combined, and one third of them are children. It is important to bear in mind that malnutrition and cholera are interconnected, because weakened and hungry people are more likely to contract cholera and less able to survive it. Estimates are projecting 150,000 cases over the next six months, in addition to the roughly 60,000 current suspected cases since April, with 500 associated deaths.

As well as being depressingly predictable, the scale of the latest outbreak is a direct consequence of the conflict. Had the parties to the conflict cared, it would have been avoidable. Nonetheless, I should praise the extraordinary speed and courage of the United Nations and its humanitarian partners, including international and national aid workers from non-governmental

organizations, who are doing all they can under the strong leadership of Humanitarian Coordinator Jamie McGoldrick.

The United Nations and its partners are working tirelessly to help authorities on all sides meet the challenge posed by this cholera outbreak, from Aden to Sa'ada and from Hudaydah to Taiz. We have worked urgently to scale up assistance, quadrupling the number of diarrhoea treatment centres in the past month and establishing 136 oral-rehydration corners. Synchronized water, sanitation and health efforts, including a nationwide awareness campaign, are in place with a view to ensuring a comprehensive and holistic response. Some 1.6 million people have already been supported through those interventions and we will not cease our efforts until the scourge of cholera is contained. I salute the local health and sanitation workers, who are trying to support all and taking no sides regardless of the warring parties' contemptible attempts to get them to do so. Together with the United Nations and other partners, they are providing round-the-clock assistance, and I would also like to thank those who have provided financial support, including from the region, to make that happen.

The humanitarian response to the cholera outbreak is one part of a much larger effort. In all, humanitarians have reached 5.8 million people this year with food assistance, including at least 3 million people every month. As the needs mount, we will need more resources, but our ability to respond is dependent on sustained and predictable funding. As the Council is aware, on 25 April the Secretary-General, together with the Foreign Ministers of Sweden and Switzerland, co-hosted a high-level pledging conference for Yemen to respond to the increasingly acute needs in the country. The conference generated $1.1 billion in very generous pledges.

We are grateful to all the donors who have made good on their pledges in full and encourage others to do the same. As of last night, 56 per cent, about $612 million of the pledges, had been paid both within and outside the humanitarian-response plan. That means that the overall humanitarian strategy and plan is only 24 per cent funded, with $489 million received of the $2.1 billion required. I strongly urge that we ensure that funding is provided in support of the humanitarian strategy and plan, since it is the most effective, neutral and impartial way to reach those most in need. With escalating needs, we will need more resources.

Let me now turn to the issue of access. Hudaydah port is a lifeline for Yemen, being the primary point of entry for commercial and humanitarian imports into the country, which has historically been between 80 and 90 per cent dependent on imported food staples. Hudaydah is also the only port in Yemen that can handle fuel, bulk and containerized cargo at scale. Yet vessels have only intermittent access to it, owing to diversions and clearance delays imposed by the coalition, which, coupled with the risk of attacks on the port, has sapped traders' confidence. Where it has normally taken a week to get into the Red Sea ports, it now often takes five times as long. Given the rising costs, major shipping companies are now simply avoiding the ports, thereby depriving the Yemeni people of desperately needed food and fuel.

I appeal to Member States to ensure that every effort is made to keep Hudaydah port open and operating. An attack on it is not in the interests of any party, as it will directly and irrevocably drive the Yemeni population further into starvation and famine. In that regard, we continue to support the efforts of the Special Envoy to develop a sustainable solution for the protection of the port as critical civilian infrastructure. In addition, bringing in the United Nations mobile cranes that have been stuck for the last four months in Dubai would be an investment in Hudaydah port's civilian character, and would help to get food and fuel to those most in need.

Aside from Hudaydah, the parties must commit to ensuring that all other ports and land routes are open for both humanitarian and commercial imports, as humanitarian action alone cannot meet the needs of a population of 27 million people. Access across the country, including in Taiz governorate, must be safe, consistent and unimpeded, and commercial goods must be allowed to reach Yemen's ports without artificial delays and corrupt exactions. It is also imperative that commercial flights to Sana'a resume in order to enable civilians to seek medical treatment and families to reunite.

Time is running out. The Yemeni people face a triple threat of armed conflict, famine and deadly disease that has already killed, injured, displaced or otherwise affected millions, and it will spare no one if it continues unchecked. The cruel irony, as I said at the beginning, is that these threats are man-made and could easily have been prevented. The international community, in concert with those parties to the conflict, now has an urgent duty to address those threats and bring Yemen

and its people on all sides of the fighting lines back from the brink of complete disaster.

As humanitarians, we will continue to do our job, but the Yemeni people also need the international community to do its job. A sustainable political agreement is the only long-term solution, and if it is to be achieved, there must be a reduction in violence, an end to violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and unimpeded access to those in need. The parties to the conflict and the international community, especially the Security Council, cannot allow the deadly combination of violence, inaction and indifference to condemn the Yemeni people to a bleak obituary.

I call on the international community to immediately undertake the following actions to avoid irreversible consequences that will have a generational impact on Yemen and the wider region. The first is to ensure the protection of the Yemeni people. For as long as military actions continue, all parties must comply with international humanitarian and human rights law, and all States must exert their influence to ensure that the parties do so. The second is to ensure that all ports and land routes remain open for both humanitarian and commercial imports, including working to avoid attacks on Hudaydah and to reopen Sana'a airport. We need the mobile cranes at the port. The third is to preserve essential Yemeni institutions and ensure that civil servants are paid. This is no longer just a question of politics or economics; it is about basic humanity, human dignity and, indeed, survival.

Cholera is spreading at an unprecedented rate and famine is knocking at the door of millions tonight. The parties to this conflict and their allies, as well other countries in the region and across the globe, must set aside politics and self-interest and respond at the most humane level, facilitating access and mobilizing resources to treat the cholera outbreak and ensure that food gets to those in need. In that spirit, I urge the parties, with the support of the international community, to redouble their efforts to reach a sustainable political settlement, ensuring that the people's protection, dignity and well-being are at the heart of any agreement. Working together, we can end one of the world's great humanitarian tragedies and put Yemen back on a path to survival and a future. The time is now.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Al-Mutawakel.

**Ms. Al-Mutawakel**: I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to bring the voice of civil society to the Security Council. Many Yemenis hope that the Council can have a positive impact on their war-weary lives.

I have come here from forgotten Yemen, overburdened by bearing witness to the grave human suffering that millions of Yemenis have endured as a result of the war. My country is in a state of total collapse.

On my shoulders, I bear the weight of the stories that have been gathered over the last three years by the Mwatana Organization for Human Rights. Mwatana operates across Yemen in extremely difficult and complicated conditions, and we do everything possible to document and give voice to the victims and survivors of human rights violations that are happening daily by all parties to the conflict in all parts of the country. One of Mwatana's goals is to build a human rights memory that will provide the foundation for future justice and accountability for the people of Yemen. Most Yemenis are not involved in the war and do not have anything to do with military activity. The most common refrain we hear from people in our field work is "We hate war. We want to live."

War in Yemen did not happen suddenly. It is the result of accumulated mistakes by all parties over the past years. However, there are real opportunities to end this war and achieve a fair settlement that puts Yemenis on track to build a State grounded in the rule of law. For those who counted on war to bring solutions, what has war achieved except thousands of civilians killed and injured, many of them women and children? War has destroyed the basic and limited infrastructure that Yemen took decades to assemble. War led to the collapse of the health system. War is stopping hundreds of thousands of Yemeni children from going to school, undermining the development of an entire generation. Hundreds of children are forcibly recruited to serve in the front lines. War has led to a humanitarian crisis that is so acute that famine is imminent. Millions are invisibly internally displaced, and recently an outbreak of cholera has infected thousands of Yemenis.

If we put a lens closer on Yemen, we could easily catch the terrifying absence of State institutions in areas controlled by de facto authority of the Houthi Ansar Allah armed group and its ally, former President Saleh, as well as in areas controlled by the authority

of President Hadi and parties and armed groups allied with him. Yemenis aspire to a strong Administration capable of providing security and basic services. Instead, they have only found armed groups engaged in conflict over power at their expense. War is providing an ideal environment for extremist groups to take hold and flourish. These groups have been working tirelessly through the war to consolidate their power at the local level. They are virtual landmines in Yemen's future and they cannot be weakened unless a state of law and order exists.

Yemenis today need the international community and the Security Council to fulfil their responsibilities to protect them. Throughout the past three years of war, all parties to the conflict have committed grave violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. This cannot be allowed to continue unchecked.

The Mwatana Organization for Human Rights has documented grave violations by the Saudi and Emirates-led coalition that has brought about the killing of thousands of civilians, mostly women and children. This coalition has struck residential compounds, public markets, cultural and heritage sites, hospitals, schools, bridges and factories. We have also documented extensive violations by Ansar Allah armed groups and their ally former President Saleh, especially in Taiz, including the use of landmines in different areas in Yemen. Furthermore, we have documented violations, including extrajudicial executions by the forces of President Hadi and parties and armed groups allied with him. Both sides share responsibility for the indiscriminate shelling of civilians and civilian facilities, recruitment of children, denial of humanitarian access, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture, violations of freedom of speech and the disappearance of a free press, harassing minorities, such as Bahais, and other grave violations.

This war is taking the greatest toll on Yemeni women, who have become prime civilian targets for all warring parties. They have lost their breadwinners, forcing them to suffer an even greater level of poverty than was evident before the conflict. Women are living an increasingly dangerous and insecure situation that restricts their movement and ability to fight poverty. Scenes of mothers, wives and daughters running from one prison to another in hope of hearing something about their detained and forcibly disappeared loved ones has been one of the hardest things to witness in this war. The people of Yemen look to the international community to ensure accountability for these serious violations of international law. Yemenis expect to see serious steps taken to restore their confidence in the capacity of the United Nations to maintain peace and security and promote justice.

During war, peacebuilding becomes an act of courage and bravery. I call on the Security Council to come together to revive the peace talks so there can be an end of this senseless war. I call on the Security Council to support the Special Envoy for Yemen to be strong in the face of warring parties and to impress an inclusive peace plan that is not biased by the vision of one party alone. I call for the comprehensive inclusion of all Yemeni parties in the peace talks and to give ample space for the participation of civil society, women and youth. I call on Security Council members to stand beside Yemenis, halt support for any party to the conflict and stop transferring arms to any warring party in the country.

The suffering of Yemenis cannot come to an end unless war ends. Long-term commitments are needed to promote peace. The Security Council also needs to take urgent concrete action to immediately mitigate suffering. These actions will require the Security Council to show courage, commitment and resolve. The Security Council should urgently establish an international independent commission of inquiry to investigate violations by all parties to the conflict, stop the sale of weapons to parties involved in human rights violations in Yemen, demand an end to the targeting of civilians and civilian objects through aerial and ground attacks, ensure the release of civilian detainees who are arbitrarily held and those forcibly disappeared under the authority of the Houthi-Saleh alliance or under the Government of President Hadi and his allies, demand that there be unhindered humanitarian access to all areas and all people in need, ensure that Sana'a International Airport is reopened, insist upon immediate agreement among the parties for a mechanism to pay salaries to public sector employees, protect Hodeida port from the armed conflict and ensure that it is restored to full functionality so it can better meet the needs of millions of Yemenis, and demand that the restrictions on the operation of civil-society organizations are lifted, press freedoms restored and all detained journalists released, especially those who are under Houthi authority.

We have before us an opportunity for the Security Council to take action to protect the people of Yemen

and support us in finding the path to a sustainable peace. Despite the difficulty of the situation on the ground, it is still possible to turn around and chart a path towards peace, democracy and economic development. However, as the war continues, we need to keep in mind that what is possible today might not be possible tomorrow. Urgent action is therefore crucial.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Llorentty Solíz** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia would like to thank the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Stephen O'Brien, to whom we express our support for all the efforts he has made to fulfil his mandate, for their briefings. I would also particularly like to thank Ms. Radhiya Al-Mutawakel for her poignant statement that has showed us the face of the grave situation in Yemen.

While the matter that we have come to discuss is an update on the establishment of the peace negotiations as a response to the conflict, we must acknowledge that the situation of the Yemeni people is becoming increasingly alarming and precarious owing to the many elements that are coming together and exacerbating their living conditions. The situation in Yemen is critical and the figures are distressing.

As Mr. O'Brien has been pointing out and as he underscored once again, the total population of Yemen is 27.4 million, more than 18 million of whom require humanitarian assistance and, among them, more than 10 million need extremely urgent assistance. There is also a shortage of food for more than 17 million people who are living in food insecurity, of which 6.8 million are at risk of famine.

Unfortunately, the situation continues to deterioate and the Yemeni people now has to deal with an outbreak of cholera, which according to the 18 May report of the World Health Organization, has led to 361 deaths in April and May and has spread to 19 of the 22 provinces that make up Yemen. According to the 24 May communiqué of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, more than 35,000 cases of possible contagion have been recorded. We are therefore very concerned that the humanitarian assistance deployed in Yemen continues to be seriously affected by the imposition of random restrictions by the parties to the conflict, as well as by the constant threat of air attacks on civilian infrastructure, which limits the distribution of humanitarian supplies, which the Yemeni people desperately need.

In the same vein, we regret and condemn the 22 May attack in Sana'a on a humanitarian convoy in which the Special Envoy was also travelling. We remind the parties to the conflict that they must provide unconditional and unrestricted access to humanitarian assistance and ensure that it is secure and not identify humanitarian convoys as military targets for any reason. We also reiterate to the regional actors involved in the conflict that they have the obligation to respect the provisions of resolution 2140 (2014) and that they must do everything possible to commit themselves to establishing a sustainable process for dialogue that will lead to a peaceful, inclusive and orderly political transition that is led by the Yemeni people and that will meet their legitimate rights and aspirations, as well as fully respect Yemen's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

We feel it is important to refer to the words of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al Hussein, who last May in a press conference in Geneva said,

> "The United Nations is concerned about the humanitarian repercussions of such an attack in terms of inflaming the humanitarian crisis even further, let alone our concerns about loss of civilian life were there to be a large-scale attack on port".

We believe that the Council should maintain a unanimous position in speaking out against these belligerent acts and campaigns and against any action that defends the use of violence or weapons as an option to solve this or any other conflict, especially when these war tactics run counter to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which the Security Council stands for. We unequivocally reiterate that the Security Council must send out a clear, quick message with regard to humanitarian assistance and with regard to the port of Hudaydah, which is the only entrance possible for humanitarian assistance for civilian victims who must now deal with not only a food crisis, but also a health crisis which could get worse if these attacks continue.

In conclusion, Bolivia would like to reiterate the three requests made in this meeting by Mr. O'Brien. We listened carefully to what he just said and I picked up on the following. Yemen has been forgotten, as can

be seen in the famine, war, collapsed economy, deadly diseases and attacks on civilians which plague the country. Yemen today is one of the greatest failures of the Council and of our Organization.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Uruguay.

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Cheikh Ahmed, Mr. O'Brien, and Ms. Al-Mutawakel for their briefings. We reiterate our support for the work being carried out by the Special Envoy and we thank him for his ongoing efforts to find a solution to the conflict.

Uruguay firmly condemns the attack that he suffered during his transfer from the Sana'a airport on 22 May during his official visit to Yemen. An attack on his person is an attack on the United Nations and is therefore unacceptable and must be condemned in the strongest terms. We also extend our deepest gratitude and recognition to the humanitarian agents and institutions in Yemen for their arduous work to bring hope to the civilian population who have been victims of this armed conflict for more than two years.

This open Security Council briefing on the situation in Yemen is not only a forum to address the issue, but it also seeks to give shed light on the cruel reality that the country is suffering and provide an opportunity to express to the thousands of Yemeni men, women and children that they have not been forgotten.

Uruguay supports the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Yemen. The negotiation process and the peace talks are the only way out of the crisis. Uruguay regrets the prolonged stagnation in the peace process, which has not been able to bring about positive results until now. We are most concerned about the fact that none of the parties is demonstrating sustained commitment or interest in achieving a political settlement that would put an end to the conflict. The United Nations and the international community can and must promote peace, but it is the Yemenis themselves who must make their own decisions in order to achieve peace. The stakeholders must acknowledge that they have to make concessions. Uruguay reiterates its call on the parties to resume the dialogue and to fully respect the commitment to a cessation of hostilities, which is fundamental step for the establishment of peace.

To achieve stability in Yemen, actors in the region and those countries that have influence on the parties must commit to working together towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Yemen has been witness to generalized violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law committed by all the warring parties. These violations have been documented in several case studies by groups of experts on Yemen. We congratulate them on their work and we encourage them to continue their work. The parties involved have shown that they are completely unwilling to investigate these horrendous acts. We therefore believe that it is up to the Security Council to establish impartial and transparent investigative mechanisms on international humanitarian law violations that have taken place in Yemen by both parties to the conflict. That is an necessary and essential step to ensuring accountability.

Last week, during the open debate on the protection of civilians and health care in armed conflict (see S/PV.7951), we stressed that civilians continue to pay the highest cost of war. In Yemen, the indiscriminate attacks are creating a real catastrophe. The bombing against civil infrastructure require our full attention and the condemnation of the international community. Those responsible for these aberrant atrocities and their accomplices must be held accountable for those crimes. The traffic and trade in weapons to the warring parties must cease because this directly contributes to the massacre of civilians. The ongoing violence and the dismantling of Yemeni institutions is also enabling terrorism to spread. As has been seen, groups, such as Da'esh and Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, are actively benefiting from the changing political environment and the vacuum in governance to recruit new members and organize new attacks.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, Uruguay is also concerned by the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, in particular the serious situation for the most vulnerable people, such as women and children. The appalling situation and the seriousness of the humanitarian situation for the Yemeni people requires immediate and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance to the civilian population, including through the port of Hudaydah. Access to that port is essential as it is the primary access route for food imports to the country.

Finally, I want to stress that we all share the responsibility of maximizing efforts to bring about peace and to alleviate the suffering of millions of people. We call on all States that can bring influence to

bear upon the parties, to collaborate in the pursuit of a peaceful solution to the conflict.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

**Mr. Alyemany** (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your outstanding leadership of the work of the Security Council this month. We thank you sincerely for allowing us to address the Council.

I begin my statement by pledging the full support of the Government and the people of Yemen for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed. We strongly condemn the assassination attempt against him in the occupied capital of Yemen by the Houthi militias allied to the former President's followers. On Monday, 22 May, the Government of Yemen issued its condemnation of that criminal act targeting the Special Envoy. The group of 18, which sponsors the political operation in Yemen, has also issued a statement strongly condemning that criminal act and calling upon the leaders of the coup to undertake a full investigation of the crime. It came at a time when the Special Envoy carried new proposals to resume peace efforts, including a truce during the holy month of Ramadan, as well as arrangements to hand over the city of Hudaydah to the legitimate Government and the exit of the Houthi militias from the city as a first step towards resuming peace negotiations in Kuwait and signing such understandings.

The Government of Yemen has expressed its initial acceptance of the peace proposals carried by the Special Envoy and its desire to put an end to Yemeni bloodshed. Regretfully, the recent visit of the Special Envoy was met with the intransigence and aggression of the leaders of the coup. Today, on the fourth day of the holy month of Ramadan, we are facing a lost opportunity, with the increasing suffering of the Yemeni people, who are at the mercy of the militias of death.

After more than two years of a coup d'état led by the Houthi militias, in association with the former President, and with the support and incitement of Iran, Yemen is experiencing one of the most horrific humanitarian tragedies. The victims of the coup are on the rise, Yemenis have been displaced to the four corners of the planet, famine has spread as have diseases — the last of which was the dreadful cholera outbreak. Thanks to the support of the international community, Yemen had eradicated cholera in past years.

Today, Yemen is a terrifying scene out of Dante's Divine Comedy, where death prevails in all of its colours and human suffering is the major headline. That is all due to the coup leaders holding on to stolen power and stealing the scarce resources of the Yemeni people. The head of that criminal coup d'état, Abdul-Malik Badreddin Al-Houthi, is sitting in his cave, alleging the holy right to rule while the international community combating terrorism is facing another pretender, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who has established the State of death and terrorism and wrongfully called it the Islamic State.

The terrorism of the Houthi movement, Da'esh, or Al-Qaida, which is controlled by hidden hands in the Iranian intelligence, is turning our lives into a nightmare. They have actually put an end to the dream of Yemenis with the result of the national dialogue conference to establish a democratic federal State. This war has never been the choice of the Yemeni Government, led by President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour. It was imposed upon us after all other peaceful options were exhausted and after we had reached many compromises so as to not endure an indiscriminate war, where the first and last loser would be the great Yemeni people.

Nevertheless, we extend a peaceful hand for a just and comprehensive solution based on the agreed instruments. Locally, regionally and internationally, those are the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its implementation mechanism and the resolutions of the Security Council — the latest of which is resolution 2216 (2015). That solution would bring genuine peace, instead of temporary peace that would lead to further wars for coup leaders, terrorists and gangs to violate our national sovereignty.

The catastrophic humanitarian situation that my country has been enduring since the rogue coup d'état of the Houthi militias and the followers of the former President requires further attention from the international community. Those gangs, which have forcefully taken power, have brought increased humanitarian suffering and the spread of famine and disease — most recently cholera — which have led to the death of many people.

In that connection, I would like to refer to the excellent outcome of the Geneva Conference of 25 April — under the sponsorship of the Secretary-

General and the Governments of Switzerland and Sweden — aimed at supporting the humanitarian response plan in Yemen for 2017. It raised approximately $1.1 million. In that regard, we call upon all countries that pledged funds to follow through so that we can use the money to combat the cholera and famine in Yemen. So far, only 65 per cent of the pledges have been honoured.

The Government of Yemen, under the leadership of the President, welcomes the Arab and international efforts to combat cholera. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, who has order the King Salman Center for Humanitarian Aid and Relief to make every effort to prevent the spread of cholera, especially since most of the areas where cholera is spread are under the control of the coup d'état forces. They have also provided facilities and medications for 50,000 people and signed an $8 million with the World Health Organization to address the cholera outbreak. It is regrettable and painful that the arrival of the Special Envoy to Sana'a coincided with massacres by the Houthi militias in Taiz, which has been under blockade for two years. It led to the death of 50 innocent civilians, most of them women and children, as well as five journalists — which was met by the appalling silence of the international community.

This is the picture of six-year-old Eliyas Aklan, who was killed by a Houthi-launched missile in Taiz on 23 May. His innocent tears will chase the criminals until justice prevails for him and all innocent children. Eliyas reminds us of another child, Fareed Al-Tharabi, five-years-old, who was killed in another Houthi massacre by a missile launched in Taiz on 13 October 2015. He died crying and pleading with his doctors not to bury him. His story was referred to by the former Permanent Representative of the United States, Ms. Samantha Power.

Taiz continues to experience horrors after two years of an appalling war and the collective punishment of its children and adults, who have rejected the coup d'état. The blockade imposed under the coup d'état has led to further displacement and the daily killing of children, women and the elderly, as well as the indiscriminate bombing of hospitals and residential areas that lack all water, food and medicine.

I call on the human conscience of Council members, in the name of the Government of Yemen, to condemn and criminalize the massacres committed by the Houthi militias and Saleh, as well as the blockade imposed on the city of Taiz and its villages. Day after day, the militia set burn and shell the houses of citizens, forcefully displacing them from their villages. We have never yet heard a call for an end to the blockade.

As the number of child victims climbs, the number of detainees and the forcible disappeared is also on the rise. All the forcibly displaced and detainees are now in the prisons of the coup masters. How many victims, children, detainees and forcibly disappeared does the Council, the United Nations, the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy need before they respond to the suffering of our people and condemn the Houthi killers? How many messages have I sent to the Secretary-General concerning the detainees without a single response? It is as if international humanitarian law has nothing to do with what is being perpetrated by that criminal gang.

The ongoing efforts of the Government of Yemen are focused on rebuilding the liberated zones and pursuing its efforts to get rid of the terrorist gangs, in cooperation with the Saudi-led coalition, the United Arab Emirates and the international community, led by the United States of America. We are striving jointly with the international community and the specialized United Nations agencies to speed the recovery and transition, from the humanitarian-relief stage through reconstruction. The Special Envoy referred to the meeting that was convened in Riyadh by the World Bank and the Government of Saudi Arabia.

We call for assistance to the Government of Yemen in implementing its economic recovery plan in the areas under its control, which constitute 80 per cent of the total territory of Yemen. It is no surprise that the first responder to the calls of His Excellency President Hadi Mansour has been the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which has pledged $10 million, $8 million of which support construction projects in the liberated areas, while the other $2 million are earmarked for the Central Bank of Yemen to prevent the devaluation of the national currency.

In line with efforts to address the deteriorating humanitarian situation, the Government is still working hard to provide salaries to all Government employees, who have not been paid for eight months thanks to the militias, which have stolen all the money from the Central Bank and its reserves. We have provided

salaries in some liberated areas and allocated some funds to areas under the control of the coup d'état. However, the militias have stolen 581 billion rials from the tax revenues and refuse to pay the salaries of those under their control. This has redoubled the humanitarian suffering of the people and made it harder for the Government to remain current in the payment of the salaries of its employees.

To conclude, we reaffirm the Yemeni Government's strong belief that a genuine, effective and sustainable solution to the deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation in Yemen requires efforts to overturn the coup d'état, restore legitimacy and State institutions, and return to normal life. In that regard, we commend the efforts of the Security Council and the Ambassadors of the group of 18 to achieve security and stability in Yemen. We reiterate our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and all the Arab coalition countries working to restore legitimacy in Yemen. We call on all members of the Security Council to pursue their unified efforts to end the humanitarian suffering in my country and to take a firm stance against those responsible for the coup and further pressure them to comply with the relevant international resolutions and respect international humanitarian law.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now invite Council Members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.*

United Nations S/PV.7955

# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

**7955**th meeting
Tuesday, 30 May 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

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|---|---|---|
| *President:* | Mr. Rosselli | (Uruguay) |
| *Members:* | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Inchauste Jordán |
| | China | Mr. Wu Haitao |
| | Egypt | Mr. Aboulatta |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | France | Mrs. Gueguen |
| | Italy | Mr. Cardi |
| | Japan | Mr. Bessho |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Umarov |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Safronkov |
| | Senegal | Mr. Barro |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skoog |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Vitrenko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Rycroft |
| | United States of America | Mrs. Haley |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016) (S/2017/445)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in the Middle East**

**Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016) (S/2017/445)**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/445, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016).

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

**Mr. O'Brien**: The cruel conflict in Syria continues to tear families apart, inflicts brutal suffering on the innocent and leaves them pleading for protection and justice. I readily acknowledge that there have been reports of a significant drop in violence in some areas of the country. However, such steps forward continue to be counter-weighed by the reality of a conflict that continues to devastate the civilian population.

On 16 May, 30 children and women were gravely injured in a heinous attack by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) on besieged neighbourhoods in Deir ez-Zor as they were lining up for water. In addition, more than 100 civilians, many of them women and children, have fallen victim, in recent weeks. to the escalating counter-ISIL airstrikes, particularly in the north-eastern governorates of Raqqah and Deir ez-Zor. Millions more are in the line of fire, facing crushing poverty and alarming physical danger. Tens of thousands of children have been killed, and for those who have survived until today, the outlook remains bleak. Children have been forcibly detained, tortured, subjected to sexual violence, forcibly recruited and in some cases executed. Close to 7 million children in Syria live in poverty. Nearly 1.75 million children remain out of school and another 1.35 million are at risk of dropping out. Approximately 7,400 schools — one in three across the country — have been damaged, destroyed or otherwise made inaccessible. Morover, even if the schools were intact, many would be unable to open, with almost a quarter of the country's teaching personnel no longer at their posts.

Outside of Syria, hundreds of thousands of Syrian children are left to face an uncertain and traumatic future on their own. They have become stateless, abandoned by the world but for the generosity of neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey, as well as Egypt. How are those children meant to function as adults? What future do those children have, given that they will often grow up to be illiterate, orphaned, starved, traumatized and maimed? What future does a country have when its next generation is a lost generation? For those suffering children, what is at stake is not politics; it is their lives and their futures. It is their innocent voices and their suffering that need advocating.

Astana produced a promising step. It produced a memorandum between the three guarantors — Iran, Russia and Turkey — on the creation of four de-escalation areas. It is a memorandum that stipulates, in no uncertain terms, that fighting must significantly decrease and unhindered humanitarian access must be enabled to those four areas. The areas essentially encompass all of the besieged locations except for those in Damascus and Deir ez-Zor. With that said, too many agreements that could have saved lives and reduced suffering have failed in the past.

Therefore, let me be clear. The agreement simply must succeed. We owe it to the 2.6 million people that we estimate to be in the four de-escalation areas. The United Nations stand ready to sit with all parties involved to make it a workable agreement — one that will make a tangible difference to civilians on the ground, one that facilitates the delivery of life-saving assistance based on the needs assessments of the United Nations without constant interference, reduced beneficiary numbers, the removal of medical and other essential items out of spite, bureaucratic restrictions and procedural and physical roadblocks.

We also must not lose sight of the fact that all over Syria, millions of people, in locations inside and outside the four de-escalation areas, continue to suffer because they lack the most basic elements needed to sustain their lives. We must not stand silent while violence flares up elsewhere in the country and parties continue to use starvation, fear tactics and the denial of food, water, medical supplies and other forms of aid as methods of war.

As this Council knows, in recent months, restricted access and increased attacks resulted in a number of so-called 'evacuation' agreements in the communities of Al-Tal, Daraya, Al-Adamiya, Khan al-Shih, Wadi Barada, eastern Aleppo, Madaya, Zabadani, Foah and Kefraya. In that past few weeks, thousands more have been moved from the besieged Barza and Al-Kabun neighbourhoods of Damascus and the besieged Al-Waer neighbourhood in the city of Homs to Idlib and Jarabulus in rural Aleppo.

The evacuations have followed years of intense airstrikes, shelling and sniping. The tactics are all too obvious — make life intolerable and make death likely; push people to choose between starvation and death or fleeing on green buses to locations that are just as unsafe. There needs to be accountability for such actions. Starve and surrender tactics represent a monstrous form of cruelty to impose upon a civilian population. We have seen it happen numerous times already — as I said, in Homs, Moadamiya, Al-Waer, and elsewhere. In fact, Darayya and Zabadani are already devoid of their civilian population. That may very well be the fate of hundreds of thousands more people still trapped in besieged locations across the country.

Evacuations are, however, only the beginning of a new set of challenges for both those who are forced to leave their homes and host communities. Travelling mostly to Idlib and northern rural Aleppo, those displaced now find themselves in an increasingly precarious environment. The capacity in those areas to support additional displacement is reaching its limit. In Idlib alone, there are over 900,000 displaced people, which places significant strain on local communities and resources. While the situation has quieted since the memorandum on de-escalation was signed, any increase in fighting — attacks by the Government of Syria, or fighting among groups inside of Idlib, for instance — would be catastrophic for those already stressed communities.

In fact, in many corners of the country, the protection space is shrinking, humanitarian conditions are worsening and the level of despair is rising. That is not due to insecurity or poor infrastructure, but rather due to increasingly strict limitations by local authorities, non-State armed groups, as well as terrorist organizations, along with the actions of some neighbouring countries. I call on members of the Council to use their influence to see that those actors respect humanitarian principles and allow the unfettered delivery of aid. We are also greatly concerned at cross-border restrictions and regulatory impediments imposed on the non-governmental organization community operating in northern Syria and are troubled by increasing reports indicating that internally displaced persons fleeing al-Raqqah Governorate are being kept for prolonged periods in screening camps and subjected to restrictions on their movement by the self-proclaimed democratic self-administration in north-eastern Syria.

We need to see a step-change in access to the increasingly dire situation in north-eastern Syria. Rather than restrictions, we need an opening of space in order to respond. With approximately 100,000 people displaced due to fighting around Raqqah since April, access is needed now through every possible modality. We need to see restrictions eased for those operating in the area. We need to see increased cross-border and cross-line access for humanitarian assistance into the area, including land access from Aleppo. I call on all those with influence over the parties involved to act now. Further delays or restrictions will only result in the continued suffering and death of civilians.

For cross-line inter-agency convoys, administrative delays on the part of the Syrian Government in the approval of facilitation letters and convoy plans continue to hamper our efforts. Every month, thousands of facilitation letters are readily signed for convoys headed to Government-controlled areas. Yet, in cross-line areas, we have only been able to secure facilitation letters for seven convoys under the April-May access plan, which has allowed us to reach 266,750 people in need. That is out of 1 million people that we requested under the bi-monthly plan. As a result, we are essentially down to one cross-line convoy per week to reach those who are most in need, with only one besieged location — namely Duma in eastern Ghouta — reached by road during the April-May period.

Compared to 2016, when we deployed 50 cross-line convoys through May, today we stand at 18 crossline convoys in 2017. In addition, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent also delivered three cross-line convoys without the United Nations, which reached 136,500 people in hard-to-reach areas during that period. Moreover, the removal of life-saving medicines and medical supplies such as surgical kits, midwifery kits, and emergency kits has continued unabated, with nearly 100,000 medical supplies refused or removed from convoys since the beginning of 2017.

In addition, and as everyone here knows — and as the Secretary-General highlighted in last week's open debate on the protection of civilians (see S/PV.7951) — attacks on hospitals and other health facilities have become commonplace in Syria. About 20 have occurred every month between January and April this year, making for an average of one attack every 36 hours and turning Syrian hospitals into death traps. Such attacks and restrictions are not only violations of international law and Security Council resolutions, they are deliberate and cowardly acts aimed at the sick, injured and infirm, at unborn children and pregnant women, and at the elderly and young children — those who are least able to protect themselves and most in need of care and assistance.

The denial and delay of access, particularly for people in besieged areas, is a political calculation and a military tactic. This much is clear in Syria. We may speak about the practical elements of delay and denial — facilitation letters, inspections, checkpoints — but these are simply the manifestation of a mindset and approach by the Government of Syria that uses civilian suffering as a tactic of war. We have seen that when the political will exists, the humanitarian imperative to deliver, based on assessed need, is possible. Facilitation letters are signed, items are not removed by inspectors and checkpoints allow safe passage.

So I call on the Council to take all necessary steps to see that the will to ensure that humanitarian-aid deliveries are in their rightful position — which is outside any military or political calculations — and that they are restored, totally impartially. The delivery of aid is not a request, it is a demand. It is the law, and denying, refusing or frustrating it is and must be a red line that is not to be crossed. Denial and delays of assistance contravene Security Council resolutions and international humanitarian law. They must end. I urge the Council to act to ensure that its resolutions are implemented. Any prevarication will result in further deaths and more suffering for civilians. Humanitarian relief cannot be viewed as an optional element to be occasionally provided. It must go where it is needed and when it is needed, not where it is allowed and when it is convenient.

As I have said numerous times before, we remain committed and ready to deliver aid through all possible modalities for people in desperate need, whoever and wherever they are. However, the bottom line is that the real extent of progress cannot be measured by ad hoc deliveries to besieged communities once or twice, or every so often. The bottom line is that we have been wasting too much of our time literally begging for facilitation letters; too much time arguing at roadblocks, pleading for trucks to be allowed to pass without a sniper taking a shot and for medical items not be removed.

I do not come here today to seek favours. Calling for humanitarian actors to be allowed sustained access to all people in need throughout Syria is not a favour. Calling for an end to the removal of medical items from convoys is not a favour. Calling for all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure is not a favour. Seeking to prevent children from being buried under piles of rubble in their basements and schools is not a favour. Medicine for the sick and food for the starving are not favours. These are the common precepts, the bedrock, of our shared humanity, and the foundations of international humanitarian law, and they must represent an unflinching call to all people's fundamental decency. I call on all those with influence on the parties to reinforce that message and to take action.

In conclusion, I would like to send my very best wishes to everyone observing the holy month of Ramadan. For Muslims in Syria, the region and across the world, it is a time for charity, contemplation and community and a time for peace and forgiveness. Let us all sincerely hope for an end to violence for this period and beyond. Let us all sincerely work to achieve the objectives of the Astana memorandum, so that the attacks and bureaucratic impositions can come to an end once and for all, and so that the United Nations and its humanitarian partners can sustainably reach the hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped behind the current front lines.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Skoog** (Sweden): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for giving us a very clear and sombre picture of the situation on the ground, and for being very clear about the demands that he, as a humanitarian actor, is making, very legitimately.

I would also like to pay tribute to the United Nations and to Mr. O'Brien's staff and partners, who are doing very admirable work on the ground in very challenging circumstances. I would also like to particularly thank him for bringing up the situation of the 6 million children in need in Syria. Children are being killed and maimed in indiscriminate attacks on a daily basis. They are callously targeted in the schools and hospitals where they seek shelter and, perhaps, a modicum of normality in their otherwise shattered lives. A whole generation of Syrian children have had their childhood stolen from them. We commend the efforts of UNICEF and its partners in responding to their needs, and we emphasize the importance of helping them to access their right to education and the psychosocial support they need.

The overall level of insecurity within Syria remains difficult to comprehend for those of us on the outside. The Syrian people continue to face danger and the threat of death every day. Every avenue must now be vigorously pursued to end the violence, and we therefore welcome the recent reduction in violence, mainly in the four de-escalation zones, as a result of the most recent meetings in Astana. We are nonetheless concerned about the military offensives being conducted outside those zones, primarily by the Syrian regime. It is essential to ensure that de-escalation in one set of zones does not result in an escalation in violence or the siege of other areas.

One of the primary sources of suffering for those in besieged areas is a lack of access to even the most basic needs, such as food. Humanitarian access to areas besieged by the Syrian regime in April and May has been deplorable, as we just heard, with only one convoy, to Duma, getting through, and that despite the decrease in violence. It is clear that a systemic change in the approval process is needed and long overdue. We therefore renew the call we have made on several occations to Damascus to provide safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to all in need. We also urge the Syrian authorities to grant permission for humanitarian agencies to use the road between Aleppo and Qamishli, which has opened up for commercial traffic.

The Duma convoy shows that access can be achieved with Russia's active engagement. My key message today is that I urge the Astana guarantors' working group to prioritize implementing the humanitarian provisions of their memorandum. We call on them to initiate a dialogue with the United Nations and its partners as soon as possible to agree on streamlined access procedures for the four de-escalation zones. As we heard today, the United Nations is ready to engage and has the capacity to deliver. If humanitarian agencies are granted unimpeded access to those zones they could reach all of the towns besieged by the regime except one, which would be a significant breakthrough. As a co-penholder, Sweden has continued to engage with all the relevant stakeholders and partners in order to seize this opportunity. Expectations for the guarantors to deliver on their commitments are high.

We are also concerned about the fact that armed opposition groups, listed terrorist groups and Kurdish local administrations are increasing restrictions to access in Idlib and elsewhere. We urge those with influence on them to use it to bring a halt to that trend. I would also like to underline that increased humanitarian access, including in the de-escalation zones, is critical to sustaining the Astana process and improving the conditions for achieving results in Geneva. The only way to end this humanitarian crisis, of course, continues to be a political solution, and we urge everyone to intensify their efforts in support of the next round of talks in the United Nations-led Geneva process.

On Thursday of last week, Mr. President, we gathered in this Chamber under your presidency to hold an open debate on the protection of civilians (see S/PV.7951). Many of us spoke about the situation in Syria, where, as the Secretary-General has said, there are no events in recent history that compare to the current protection crisis. We reiterate our concerns about the forced displacement of civilians to areas where there is a severe lack of protection for them. Any evacuation of civilians must be safe and voluntary, and to a place of their choosing. We remind all parties involved of their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Civilian casualties are no longer seen as a consequence of this conflict. Civilians and civilian infrastructure such as medical facilities are targeted as objectives to gain military advantage, particularly by the regime side. Despite resolution 2286 (2016), there have been over 400 attacks on medical facilities since the conflict began, with 30 hospitals reportedly attacked in April alone. This fundamentally undermines international humanitarian law. It is now incumbent on the Council to intensify our efforts to halt this trend and to build on the consensus during Thursday's important debate that civilians in armed conflict must be protected.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my thanks to Mr. O'Brien for his comprehensive briefing to the Security Council. I thank him in particular for focusing on children today. Millions of Syrians continue to suffer, whether it be upon the anvil of the war raging in Syria or because they were forced to leave their homes with their families to live in refugee camps. Indeed, among the suffering are children born in the past few years who have only known camps as home.

The crisis continues to rage and the Syrian people continues to suffer, which the reports of the Secretary-General describe in detail. We see no end on the horizon. I would like to express our appreciation to all those working to deliver emergency assistance in Syria and renew Egypt's call to all parties, Syrian and international alike, to ease humanitarian access through facilitating procedures and providing full support to the United Nations and its partners so that they can safely reach those in need, particularly in besieged areas.

In the same context, we call on the States designated to be guarantors of the de-escalation zones under the memorandum of understanding recently signed in Astana to make every possible effort to implement the humanitarian terms of the memorandum. At the same time, we welcome the diminishing intensity of confrontations in the areas set up under the memorandum. We hope this will also be reflected in improved humanitarian access, while we know full well that safe and lasting humanitarian access under the memorandum will be a true humanitarian achievement on the ground with respect to besieged areas.

Six years have passed since the Syrian crisis began. First, it was an internal crisis, but it quickly became a proxy war. Malicious terrorist groups have spread in a wholly unprecedented way. Syrian land has become a safe haven for tens of thousands of foreign terrorist fighters who will continue to threaten the region, indeed the world, for years to come. It is perhaps important to stress anew that the danger posed by the threat of terrorism in Syria is very real; it cannot be underestimated. This phenomenon did not come about as a result of conditions on the ground. Rather, it is a phenomenon supported, financed and armed by parties with a direct interest in spreading chaos and extremism. Despite the unprecedented number of parties to military operations in Syria, and despite the fact that fighting terrorism is one of the most important objectives of these operations, the presence of interested parties does not reflect a unified view on how to deal with the threat or how to stop the financing and support of terrorist groups, which is a subject that needs to be reviewed.

It is easy to continue delving into the details of the humanitarian issues before us. It is easy to continue condemning the fall of civilians and the targeting of hospitals and schools. It is easy to demand easier humanitarian access. However, experience shows that if we stop there, we will not put an end to the tragedy on the ground in the country. The only way to end the humanitarian suffering of Syrians is to reach a comprehensive political settlement in accordance with the Geneva accord and resolution 2254 (2015) with a view to preserving Syria's unity and sovereignty on its land.

I would therefore call on all members of the Security Council — and renew my call on the joint chairmanship of the International Syria Support Group — to initiate a frank dialogue on the political process in Syria and on how to combine the various initiatives into a comprehensive approach to the crisis that leads to an end of the humanitarian crisis and serves the aspirations of the Syrian people to democracy and freedom in a unified country, one that chokes off terrorism and its supporters.

**Mr. Bessho** (Japan): I would like to thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

In the 30 days since the previous Security Council meeting on the humanitarian situation in Syria (see S/PV.7931), we have heard about ongoing difficulties and continuing tragedies, but at the same time we have also received some positive news, even if, as I said, the overall situation continues to be dire. On the political side, Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura convened the

sixth round of talks in Geneva. In the area of the cessation of hostilities, the three guarantors of the Astana process agreed on the memorandum of understanding on the four de-escalation zones. With respect to humanitarian access, the United Nations inter-agency convoy delivered food and medical items to eastern Ghouta, which was a much-awaited development.

In addition to the developments I just mentioned, the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) has been regularly exchanging information and seeking solutions that are possible in the short term. As a member of the ISSG and as the humanitarian co-penholder, Japan has been making efforts to convince the Syrian Government to provide facilitation letters and allow access to United Nations inter-agency convoys. Unfortunately, these individual efforts cannot overcome the fact that humanitarian access is neither systematic nor consistent.

Mr. O'Brien noted two months ago that successful access has always been the result of humanitarian workers' patient negotiation and use of one or two influential channels. We are aware that the Syrian Arab Red Crescent has been such a channel and has pushed for expanded access. However, it is essential that the Security Council itself together with the ISSG undertake serious and coordinated efforts to expand discrete work into truly effective action that results in full and good faith implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Japan will continue to seek solutions to the pressing humanitarian situation, in cooperation with the other humanitarian co-penholders. We ask that all actors, especially in the Security Council and with political influence, do the same.

The Astana process guarantors are attempting to reduce the fighting in the four de-escalation zones, which include the besieged and hard-to-reach areas where most of the people are located, as Mr. O'Brien pointed out today. Our expectations on this front are high because so much of the humanitarian crisis is concentrated in these areas. Expanded information and coordination with United Nations humanitarian actors and the Security Council by the guarantors are needed in order to make these efforts as effective as possible.

**Mr. Rycroft** (United Kingdom): I thank Mr. Stephen O'Brien for his powerful briefing and for all he does on this crucial issue. We are meeting today exactly five months since a ceasefire was declared in Syria. Sadly, as Stephen has set out, it is a ceasefire that exists in name only. The past five months have seen continued fighting, continued atrocities and continued destruction. Throughout civilians have been maimed and killed, starved and besieged. In towns like Khan Shaykhun, they have been exposed to the very worst of humankind.

Like many others in this Chamber, we cautiously welcomed the ceasefire and the Astana agreements on de-escalation zones. After six years of fighting, we are all ready to support any genuine effort to bring an overdue end to the bloodshed. But the fact is that the Astana plans have done little to help the people of Syria, instead, so far, they have done a great deal to help the regime and its allies. The guns have fallen silent only where it has suited them. The guns have been deafening elsewhere. So, in some places, yes, there has been an overdue reduction in the violence, but only where it suits the regime.

We need only ask the people of Dar'a governorate, one of the four so-called de-escalation zones, what the ceasefire feels like on the ground. Last week barrel bomb after barrel bomb, air strike after air strike, rained down on opposition-held areas there. Is that what the regime means by ceasefire? Is that what it means by de-escalation? And just as the attacks have continued, so have the sieges. At the end of April, the United Nations estimated over 620,000 people were living under siege in Syria, the overwhelming majority in towns and villages besieged by the regime and its allies. How can anyone claim there is a ceasefire in place when the equivalent population of Las Vegas is being besieged? Quite simply, one cannot.

Going hand in hand with the continued attacks and continued besiegement is the continued failure to improve humanitarian access. As Stephen said, in the past two months, there has been just one aid delivery to an area besieged by the regime and that delivery was too little too late, providing supplies for the bare minimum of the population.

It does not have to be this way. The United Nations is standing by ready to deliver aid and medicine to those in critical need. It knows the routes it will take. It has the assurances it needs from the opposition and it has the mandate to act. All of us around this table have agreed in countless resolutions that access must be granted, but instead the United Nations teams are forced to wait — not for aid, not for supplies, but instead for the regime's letters of approval, letters that never arrive. So the children continue to go hungry and

the sick and wounded continue to die in pain. This is not about bureaucracy or paperwork; these are the cold calculating actions of a regime that chooses to starve its fellow Syrians into surrender. One can see why the United Nations judges that this kind of behaviour constitutes war crimes.

In light of these continuing atrocities, it is clear that the guarantors of the Astana process need to do more, so much more, to make the ceasefire and de-escalation zones a reality. This must mean a genuine end to the violence — a ceasefire in deed and not just in thought. It must mean effective and impartial monitoring mechanisms, ideally reporting to the Security Council, so that those who violate the ceasefire are named and held to account. It means sustained humanitarian access for the United Nations and its partners, with the United Nations being allowed to assess what each de-escalation zone needs. Those with influence over the regime must ensure that this access is given. It is long overdue.

Above all, if there is to be a long-term peace in Syria, there has to be full implementation of resolution 2254 (2017), as our Egyptian colleague has just said, and there has to be justice. There has to be justice for the people of Khan Shaykhun, for the people of Aleppo, for the people of so many places across Syria who have endured for so many years. Without these steps, there simply is not a credible plan. There is just the fiction that we have today. It is a fiction where ceasefire exists and yet bombs still fall. It is a fiction that has endured for too long.

**Mrs. Gueguen** (France) (*spoke in French*): The humanitarain situation, which Mr. Stephen O'Brien eloquently described, remains tragic and very worrying in several ways. I will highlight at least five of them.

First of all, the violation of the prohibion of the use of chemical weapons — which should have been absolute — continues to outrage our conscience. On 26 April, France sent to the Security Council its analysis of the circumstances surrounding the use of chemical weapons on 4 April in Khan Shaykhun. This analysis was carried out by our experts and is irrefutable. It estalishes without at doubt the invovlement of the Syrian armed and security forces.

Secondly, the violence persists on the ground, despite the fact the signing of the 4 May agreement. The general high level has gone down in recent weeks, but the incidents that took place, particularly in the areas of Hama, Ghouta and Dar'a, show how precarious this seeming reduction in violence is. The guarantors of the truce undertook their responsibility to oversee its implementation. We therefore call upon the guarantor States of the Astana process, in particular Russia and Iran, to effectively impose the full cessation of hostilities on the Syrian regime. Improving the situation on the ground is essential to the success of the negotiations with a view to political transition in Geneva under the aegis of the United Nations.

The third matter of concern is the humanitarian situation, which is far from improving. The regime continues to block the access of humanitarian convoys and to besiege opposition-held settlements. More than 620,000 people still live in besieged areas. France reiterates its call for the immediate lifting of these sieges. Assistance must go to all the people in need, wherever they are in the Syrian territory, in accordance with humanitarian principles.

Fourthly, the implementation of local evacuation agreements concluded by the regime, after having starved and besieged civilians for many years, is generally carried out without international supervision and leads to large-scale forced displacements of the population. As the Secretary-General underscored in his report, such displacements could constitute war crimes or even crimes against humanity. We therefore demand that these agreements, which are imposed by force, cease; that evacuations be carried out in accordance with international humanitarian law; that civilians be treated with dignity; and, finally, that the ceasefire be fully respected.

Fifthly, the situation of the detainees is of particular concern. The Caesar files discuss it. According to reliable information, 500,000 people have been imprisoned by the Bashar Al-Assad regime since 2011. The reported information on the possible use by Damascus of a crematorium to conceal the extent of the summary executions perpetrated at the Sednaya prison must be considered with utmost attention .

We are constantly repeating in this Chamber that the Damascus regime must respect its international obligations and allow full, safe, unconditional and unhindered access for the United Nations and its humanitarian partners to people in need throughout the Syrian territory. Its supporters must put pressure on the regime in that regard.

The Syrian regime continued refusal to issue facilitation letters for the loading of convoys is

wholly unjustifiable. That responsibility lies squarely on Damascus, which continues to deny access to humanitarian actors and has used starvation as a war strategy. We demand that the Syrian regime authorize the humanitarian convoys to reach people in need. Attacks on hospitals, medical facilities and humanitarian convoys, as well as school buildings and homes persist. The Secretary-General has reiterated his appeal to refer the case to the International Criminal Court. We must shed all possible light on those innumerable violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

In the face of that tragic assessment, it is more urgent than ever to usher in a political transition in the framework of the Geneva negotiations. France fully supports the negotiation process in Geneva under the auspices of the Special Envoy, — in accordance with resolution 2354 (2017) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) — as the only way to put an end to the suffering of the Syrian people and the humanitarian tragedy unfolding before our eyes. More than ever, we reiterate the urgency of reaching a political solution that will culminate in a genuine transition in Syria.

**Mrs. Haley** (United States): I thank Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for his briefing. Last week, I stood in the no-man's land between Syria and Turkey where trucks with life-saving humanitarian aid begin their perilous journey to reach desperate men, women and children in Syria. In the course of five days in Jordan and Turkey, I witnessed the generosity of those countries in providing Syrian refugees health and educational services. I met dedicated teachers and doctors who, with the help of the United States and the United Nations, are working to shape a better future for Syrians. I sat and spoke with refugee children and met the counsellors who are helping them deal with the trauma that has marked their young lives.

Overwhelmingly, the displaced Syrian men, women and children with whom I spoke want to go home but, tragically, the violence and brutality that led them to flee their homeland has continued since we last met. There is no peace in Syria, only continuing, appalling suffering. There is no home to which those desperate people can return. According to one Syrian human rights group, in just the month of April, the Al-Assad regime killed nearly 500 civilians. That brings the total number of Syrians killed by the regime in just the past five months to more than 2,000. The same group reports that the total number of civilians killed by all parties during this period is more than 3,800.

The Syrian Government continues to imprison tens of thousands of its people. It subjects them to such violence and inhumane conditions, including torture and sexual violence, that those who manage to survive suffer devastating and lasting damage. Their families suffer as well. But the most persuasive indicator of the continuing hell that is life in Syria is what we have learned this past month about what has been built inside Al-Assad's notorious Sednaya prison. Amnesty International calls the prison a "human slaughterhouse". Survivors report being approached by wardens inside with ropes and knives. They are then given a choice — kill friends and relatives, also in the prison, or be killed themselves. The evidence comes from a combination of photographs of structural changes in the prison and estimates of the horrifying rate of killings behind its walls. It has led us to conclude that the Al-Assad regime has constructed a crematorium in the prison to dispose of victims' bodies.

That is an appalling discovery. Even if Russia and Iran had no direct role in the construction of the crematorium, they have either aided in or passively looked away as the Al-Assad regime commits atrocities that are reminiscent of history's worst war crimes. It is hard to fathom yet another regime so soulless that it has to devise a more efficient method of disposing of all the dead bodies it generates, but that is where the evidence leads us. We need Russia to use its influence over the Al-Assad regime to bring an end to those atrocities. Even those inside Syria who managed to avoid Al-Assad's prisons do not avoid suffering. The bombings of hospitals and schools continue unabated.

I want to thank Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for calling our particular attention to the staggering and unacceptable impact of this war on children. Countless Syrian children have lost family, friends and other loved ones, and witnessed first-hand the unspeakable horrors of war. For the more than three million Syrian children under the age of six, many now orphaned, war is all they have ever known.

As a recent report by Save The Children highlights, children wake up at night screaming from reliving those horrors as they fall asleep. They wet their beds; some have lost the ability to speak, while others tell their friends and families they would rather be dead than live another day hungry and afraid. Others turn to drugs as a way to cope with what they have endured. We witnessed first-hand the effects on those children, with many refusing to leave the house or struggling with fear

of loud noises. The United Nations, non-governmental organizations and assistance providers have done an admirable job trying to assist those children, but the systems and structures that exists to provide care and support for children are eroding around them.

One in three schools in Syria have been destroyed, damaged, or are being used as a shelter for the displaced or for military purposes. More than half of Syria's public health facilities have closed and more than 75 per cent of Syrian households' children have to help support their families, with many of them as the sole breadwinners. The psychological and physical toll on Syrian children could cost us an entire generation if action is not taken. I applaud the United Nations for recognizing the challenges facing those children and recognize the United Nations-led No Lost Generation approach to provide counselling and education to school-age Syrians, other refugees and vulnerable Jordanians who cannot always access formal education.

But the truth is no child should have to endure any of that. The Council is in a position to chart a different course for the children of Syria and give them the future they dream of and deserve. Ultimately, the best and only way to truly support those kids is by ending the conflict and getting them the assistance they need. Unfortunately, delivery of humanitarian aid continues to be blocked by the Government. The regime continues to put up bureaucratic roadblocks to the delivery of life-saving food and medicine. No one is fooled by the games they are playing. They are making the choice to starve their own people for political gain and are being supported by Iran, as Russia looks the other way.

The message I took to the refugees I visited last week was that the United States will never give up working to ease their suffering, but we have to be honest — what they want, what they need is to return home — but they will never have a home to return to until there is peace in Syria. In addition to the political solution, we must start to focus on the development needs of host countries, as well as the transition for Syrians to go home.

I was at a Turkish camp and one of the refugees came up to me and asked that we remember that they need our support. He said that Al-Assad is a brutal leader and that "we are happy when we listen to you and when you are talking about us. Please do not forget about the Syrian people." That must be our constant, overriding and unfaltering purpose.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for his briefing.

Recently, thanks to the joint efforts of the international community, the political settlement of the Syrian issue has gained momentum. Recently concluded Geneva talks have made progress, while the last round of Astana dialogue has created conditions for the consolidation of the ceasefire and the scaling up of humanitarian relief. China commends the mediation efforts of the United Nations and the efforts by Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkey and Iran in advancing the Astana dialogue, and hopes that it will be conducive to the alleviation of the humanitarian situation in Syria and the promotion of a political settlement.

Despite recent difficulties on the ground, United Nations humanitarian agencies continue to dispatch relief convoys to relevant areas in Syria. China commends those efforts and urges parties in Syria to effectively implement relevant Security Council resolutions, observe the ceasefire agreement and actively coordinate with United Nations humanitarian relief operations by providing rapid, safe and unhindered access. The international community should implement as soon as possible the outcomes of the Brussels international conference on Syria by providing assistance to Syria and to relevant countries in the region.

Political settlement is the only viable way to completely ease the humanitarian situation in Syria. Special Envoy De Mistura has announced that the next round of Geneva talks will be held in June. The parties concerned should adhere unswervingly to diplomatic efforts and continue to support the role of the United Nations as the main mediator and the work of the Special Envoy; jointly encourage the parties in Syria to participate constructively in the next round of Geneva talks, under the principle of Syrian-owned and Syrian-led and take part in dialogue and negotiations, in the quest for a comprehensive, lasting solution that is acceptable to everyone.

Attacks launched by terrorist organizations in Syria severely impede international relief efforts. China calls on the international community to step up counter-terrorism coordination efforts, adopt unified standards and resolutely combat all terrorist organizations identified by the Security Council.

China continues to support the alleviation of the humanitarian situation in Syria and the political settlement of the Syrian question. The Special Envoy of the Chinese Government on Syria attended the most recent round of Geneva talks to promote dialogue for peace. China stands ready to continue to play a constructive role in reaching a comprehensive, impartial and appropriate solution to the Syrian issue at an early date.

**Mr. Cardi** (Italy): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for his briefing.

Today, once again we have heard a sobering briefing, which underscores that the humanitarian situation in Syria has in no way improved. While there are indications of a reduction in violence since the adoption of the Astana agreement, fighting continues in key areas and there is still no meaningful humanitarian access to civilians living in besieged and hard-to-reach communities. A considerable amount of humanitarian assistance is given through regular programming and cross-border assistance — the latter being provided without the need for the regime's approval, thanks to authorization by the Security Council.

But where needs are greatest, such as in areas besieged by the Syrian regime, there has been no improvement for many months. On the contrary, compared to last year's levels, the number of cross-line inter-agency convoys for besieged or hard-to-reach locations has, in fact, significantly decreased. And where convoys are allowed to enter, medical and surgical items are still removed by the regime, in what amounts to a despicable practice that is contrary to international humanitarian law, as well as to Security Council resolutions and International Syria Support Group Ministers' agreements.

Besieged eastern Ghouta remains an area of deep concern, in particular for the health needs of the population. Besieged civilians in eastern Ghouta need to be reached by the United Nations and other humanitarian partners. One single convoy for a limited number of beneficiaries is not the change of policy that is needed. In Al-Waer and Barze in eastern Ghouta, we call upon the Syrian Government to allow the United Nations to carry out assessment missions and to monitor the ongoing so-called evacuations that may amount to forced population transfers to opposition-held areas. Access by the United Nations should also be guaranteed in the so-called liberated areas, such as Wadi Barada, where, since rebels were evacuated, no monitoring or humanitarian missions have been possible.

We are also worried about reports of increasing restrictions for the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies and organizations operating in Idlib and north eastern Syria, where assistance has been curtailed, leaving many in need. We remain concerned about the possibility that chemical arms will be used again in Syria. In that respect, accountability for their use, including at Khan Shaykhun, must remain priority objective of the Council.

The general decrease in violence that has followed the Astana agreement is a step forward. Yet, some areas, such as Idlib, eastern Ghouta and Dar'a, have seen an increase in fighting, as the parties jockey for positions and as the regime tries to strengthen its presence in key strategic territory. The reduction in violence should have prompted an increase in humanitarian access. As we have seen, that has not been the case so far.

In that regard, through the implementation of the Astana agreement of 4 May, we expect that substantive and sustainable results can finally be achieved on the humanitarian front. In that framework, the United Nations must have an active role in the implementation of the humanitarian dimension of the Astana agreement, ensuring that assistance can be provided, according to the United Nations impartial assessment of needs, and that people who wish to leave or require medical evacuation can do so — all with respect for humanitarian law and principles. We would not like to see the creation of parallel tracks on humanitarian issues, without the direct involvement of the United Nations.

Finally, ensuring a real ceasefire and safe, immediate and unhindered humanitarian access to all people in need remains the priority. Realizing rapid humanitarian dividends for the population will also help to create the conditions conducive to progress on the political track in Geneva, under the auspices of Mr. Staffan de Mistura and in the framework of resolution 2254 (2015).

**Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia): I wish to express appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Mr. Stephen O'Brien for his briefing. As usual, it was very exhaustive and clear.

We also express our appreciation to the United Nations and its partners for their sustained efforts in trying to deliver the much needed humanitarian

assistance to those in need, under extremely difficult circumstances.

As described in detail by the Under-Secretary-General, the humanitarian situation in Syria remains a source of serious concern. The fighting has continued unabated, leaving many civilians killed, injured and displaced, and destroying civilian institutions and infrastructure. Nevertheless, we note that since the signing of the de-escalation memorandum by the three guarantors, Russia, Turkey and Iran, violence has decreased in the de-escalation zones. Any effort that reduces violence in Syria should be welcomed and we appreciate the efforts of the guarantors to implement the ceasefire agreement. As Under-Secretary-General O'Brien has said, it has to succeed. It is vital that the reduction of violence translate into safe, sustained and rapid humanitarian access, which will help to address the continued challenge of reaching out to those in need of urgent assistance.

Only seven inter-agency convoys have been allowed in April and May and their capacity to deliver aid is underutilized. That should certainly change and implementing a simplified facilitation procedure will be instrumental in enhancing aid delivery. In that regard, the cooperation of the Syrian Government is indeed critical in addressing administrative challenges in order to improve humanitarian access. Ultimately, the long-term solution to the humanitarian situation depends on the Syrian-led political process, under the auspices of the United Nations. In that connection, we continue to support the Astana process and the Geneva talks, which complement each other.

No doubt, as we discussed last week, a political solution may not be easy to achieve over the short term, but it is the only sane option. That is why we believe that even small and incremental progress should be welcomed. That is also why it behoves all the Syrian stakeholders to be fully committed to stopping the war and ending the suffering of the people. Let me say that we align ourselves with what the representative of Egypt said regarding the danger that terrorism represents in Syria. It bears responsibility for complicating the situation in the country. Third parties have played a big role in the development of those complications. As memebrs of the Council know, the success of the political track in Syria hinges on the concerted efforts of countries of the region, along with major Powers with influence on the parties. Most importantly, it hinges on the unity of this Council. If we succeed here, then we will be taking a huge step forward in addressing the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

**Mr. Barro** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Stephen O'Brien, for introducing the thirty-ninth report of the Secretary-General on the humanitarian situation in Syria (S/2017/445) and for his enlightening briefing. Through him, Senegal again pays tribute to the ongoing sacrifices made by the emergency medical personnel acting on behalf of Syrian civilians, who are suffering through their sixth year of conflict.

My delegation recalls the devastating impact of the conflict on the children of Syria. In particular, I should like to focus on the fate of the 2.4 million children who have been displaced from their homes and the 280,000 children who still living in besieged areas. In that regard, we echo the appeal launched by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, calling for an investigation into crimes committed against children, including through active cooperation with existing mechanisms, such as the Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism on international crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Despite the efforts under way, the cessation of hostilities triggered by the Astana process, which initially elicited hope and optimism, remains fragile. Unfortunately, we are still witnessing a large number of Syrian victims, in addition to the ongoing destruction of public infrastructure, such as schools, health-care facilities and markets, in violation of international humanitarian law and resolution 2286 (2016). The United Nations has registered 30 attacks against health-care facilities and two against schools.

Despite the current difficult situation, the United Nations and its partners continue to provide humanitarian assistance in extremely difficult conditions to the people most in need, whose numbers have seen a substantial reduction of some 20,000 people in 13 besieged areas of the country. However, there still remain 624,000 people in need. In that regard, my delegation notes that there has been an improvement

in humanitarian access to some areas that have been besieged by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), thanks to locally signed agreements. We remind all parties to the conflict of their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law to ensure access to those providing assistance, including medical supplies, in safe, unrestricted, unconditional and unimpeded conditions via the most direct routes, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

That having been said, my delegation reiterates its call on the relevant authorities of Syria to continue delivering facilitation letters, which are essential to the optimal implementation of the programmes of the humanitarian agencies of the United Nations and their partners. We hope that the cessation of hostilities will spread throughout the country and that, better yet, it will translate into a significant improvement in the delivery of humanitarian assistance under United Nations coordination. My delegation therefore welcomes the efforts made by the guarantors of the Astana process, namely, Russia, Turkey and Iran, in particular the memorandum of understanding whereby they are committed to creating de-escalation zones in specific areas of the country so as to facilitate the cessation of hostilities, humanitarian assistance and a return to conditions conducive to the peace process under United Nations auspices.

My delegation reiterates its encouragement to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, through the Fact-Finding Mission, in its efforts to shed light on the use of chemical weapons in the attack on Khan Shaykhun in order to hold accountable the perpetrators of that heinous act, whose many victims included children. We reaffirm the priority of fighting and violent extremism terrorism, including ISIL and the former Al-Nusra Front, pursuant to a global strategy that respects international humanitarian law and relevant Security Council resolutions.

In conclusion, we reiterate our faith that a negotiated political solution is the only way out of the crisis in Syria, which has had devastating consequences, in line with the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2016) and under the auspices of the United Nations. We welcome the sixth round of negotiations led by Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, which will promote the ongoing exchange of information on pertinent issues, such as constitutional reform, the political transition, national integrity and the fight against terrorism.

**Mr. Umarov** (Kazakhstan): We express our deep appreciation for the briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Stephen O'Brien, on the tragic humanitarian situation in Syria.

We commend and appreciate the efforts made by the United Nations, under the leadership of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and his colleagues in the field, to supply food, fuel and potable water to areas in need in Syria, as well as his efforts to organize the evacuation of civilians. We also support the humanitarian efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and United Nations agencies working on behalf of the Syrian people. At the same time, we are of the view that humanitarian assistance should not be politicized, as the lives of hundreds of thousands of Syrians, especially children, depend on the timely delivery of humanitarian aid by parties engaged in the humanitarian sector. We ask the guarantors of the ceasefire — Russia, Turkey and Iran — to continue their important work towards reconciling the conflicting parties. It is gratifying to know that the number of settlements that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 1,500. We welcome that process.

Kazakhstan believes that the war cannot be considered over until the last mine is cleared. We therefore support Russia's appeal to create an international coalition to demine Syrian territory. My delegation also considers that it would be expedient to establish a fund to finance the specialized commercial companies that would carry out such work. We strongly condemn attacks on schools, hospitals and other medical facilities, which only worsen an already difficult humanitarian situation in the country. We call on the parties to the Syrian conflict to comply with international humanitarian law and refrain from actions aimed at destroying civilian infrastructure, water-supply facilities and medical and educational institutions.

Kazakhstan wishes to draw the attention of the Council to the trend of mass forced resettlement of civilians, which often happens on a false basis of compassion. Such practices can result in artificial changes to the population's composition, aggravating interreligious differences among citizens, and can threaten Syria's territorial integrity, according to the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/522,

annex), which is the basis for the possibility of achieving a political agreement as soon as possible.

Kazakhstan is concerned about the fate of detainees being held in Syrian prisons. We call on the Syrian Government to allow United Nations representatives to investigate the allegations of violence against prisoners, including those in the Saydnaya prison. We share the view that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict and that it will be essential to settle it through political means in the spirit of the negotiating processes in Geneva and Astana. We urge the parties to the conflict and the guarantors to observe the provisions of the 6 May memorandum on establishing de-escalation zones in Syria. We believe that the memorandum can help to advance a political settlement. While we have been informed that the cessation of hostilities between Government forces and the armed opposition groups that have already joined the ceasefire regime is visible within the boundaries of the de-escalation zones, no initiative aimed at establishing peace in the conflict zones can be successful or effective without the Security Council's support.

In Syria, time is precious and counted in human lives. Procrastination means death for countless innocent citizens, particularly children. The Security Council has a special duty to end the bloodshed there, but for more than six years it has been unable to agree on measures to contain this brutal civil war, which has seriously affected not just the lives of millions of peaceful Syrians but the entire region. We need unity to achieve success, and we should strive for that.

**Mr. Vitrenko** (Ukraine): We too are grateful to Mr. O'Brien for his sobering and chilling account of the humanitarian situation in Syria. This month, unfortunately, seems to be no different from previous ones, since the humanitarian track continues to be dominated by devastating negative trends, as we just heard. While there are many of them, today I would like to touch on three areas of particular concern.

First, there are still more than 600,000 people under siege. Of those, 82 per cent are besieged by the regime's forces. At the same time, the issues of sustainable humanitarian access and lifting the sieges are an integral part of the Astana memorandum and the concept of de-escalation zones. The question, therefore, is about how much real progress has been made here. Has Damascus shown any willingness to follow through on the memorandum? The answer lies in the dreadful sentence we just heard from Mr. O'Brien — that civilian suffering is a tactic of war.

Secondly, we are alarmed by the most recent UNICEF report on the suffering of millions of children in Syria, as well as the horrifying information just provided by the Under-Secretary-General. More than 2 million children are living in besieged or hard-to-reach areas around Syria, with little to no humanitarian aid. Such a reckless and deliberate strategy carries fundamental risks for the long-term stability of not just Syria and the Levant but the entire Middle East. Depriving these children of basic necessities is equivalent to creating the best possible environment for the recruitment campaigns of Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. Leaving young Syrians without hope and turning them into a lost generatio, will end up creating a long-term safe haven for terrorists at the very heart of the region.

Lastly, we are concerned about the continuing forced displacement of civilians in the eastern districts of Damascus and other regions of Syria, which is leading to devastating demographic and humanitarian consequences. Such actions may amount to violations of international humanitarian law and an attempt to change the demographic composition of modern Syria. These and other outrages committed against civilians by the Syrian regime with the help of its sponsors, first among them the Russian Federation, must come to an end.

**Mr. Inchauste Jordán** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for his report and once again reiterate our full support for the work he has been tasked with.

The fighting that has resulted in death and destruction in Syria has now been going on for more than six years. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, about 13.5 million people have been forced to flee their homes for safety. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has reported that more than 620,000 people remain under siege in Syria and about 5 million have fled the country between 2011 and March of this year. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs believes that over the same period about 6.6 million more people, half of them children, have been internally displaced within Syria.

The humanitarian situation in Syria remains critical. In April alone, according to the Secretary-General's report issued on 23 May (S/2017/445), there were around 30 attacks on medical and educational facilities and personnel. We are very concerned about the fact that despite the ceasefire that has been implemented in accordance with resolution 2336 (2016), attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure by the parties to the conflict still continue.

Bolivia insists firmly that agreements reached in the framework of the ceasefire must be abided by and respected, and we reiterate that all the parties involved are obliged to ensure the safety and integrity of everyone caught up in the conflict. We also welcome the most recent message, on 26 May, from Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in which he urged all the parties to the conflict to take much greater care to distinguish between legitimate military targets and civilians, and to fulfil their obligation to protect the population, saying that

> "[t]he same civilians who are suffering from indiscriminate shelling and summary executions by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant are also falling victim to the escalating air strikes, particularly in the northeastern governorates".

On behalf of Bolivia, I would like to reiterate our appreciation for the work being done to alleviate the humanitarian crisis facing the Syrian people by the staff of various humanitarian aid agencies and organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Syrian Red Crescent, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration. We would also like to highlight the important work that the Russian centre for the reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has been doing, both in ensuring security for the deployment of humanitarian assistance and in evacuating people from areas where there have been armed clashes. In that regard, we would like to remind the parties to the conflict once again that they must allow unconditional access for humanitarian assistance. They should ensure and protect its security and integrity and refrain from targeting humanitarian-assistance convoys as military objectives. We call on the parties to the conflict to intensify efforts to guarantee humanitarian access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas.

We believe that as long as military tactics take precedence over politics, there can be no lasting peace and that the civilian population, especially women and children, will be exposed to unnecessary suffering as a result. We also firmly condemn all acts of terrorism as criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of motive and wherever, whenever and by whom they are committed. We reaffirm the importance of ensuring that all States combat this human scourge by every possible means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and their other obligations under international law.

Lastly, we reiterate that the only way to resolve this conflict is through an inclusive political process, organized and led by the Syrian people, and we therefore reaffirm our support for the progress that has been made in the Astana and Geneva meetings and express our fervent hope that those dialogues can help us achieve a definitive and lasting peace.

**Mr. Safronkov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. O'Brien for his briefing. We highly value the work being done conscientiously by humanitarian workers in fulfilment of their mandate.

As a result of the memorandum of understanding concluded in Astana on 4 May on the de-escalation zones, the intensity of the armed clashes in Syria has significantly diminished. This is a fact that has been acknowledged by many within Syria and outside. To assert the contrary is to intentionally undermine the achievements of the Astana process, which is bearing tangible results and is providing impetus in the political negotiations in Geneva. We intend to pursue the Astana process, and we are grateful to the leadership of Kazakhstan for the political and organizational assistance it has offered.

At the same time, we condemn the renewed mortar shelling of the Russian embassy in Damascus on 22 May, which was undertaken from the terrorist-controlled Jobar region. It is unfortunate that our Western partners had nothing to say about this today. We would kindly like to ask our partners to work with the people they sponsor to make sure that they stop targeting Russian diplomats.

We have not failed to notice the fact that the humanitarian nature of the reports is being diluted. Instead of an objective analysis of the humanitarian situation, we are seeing calls for transferring the Syria matter to the International Criminal Court and the need for a discussion of the problem of assisting

a very questionable investigator mechanism. The reports should paint a broader picture of the work that helps to bring a peaceful life back. For example, something should be said about demining, which is part of a humanitarian action plan, and generally about the efforts being made to normalize the situation in the country. Also worth mentioning is the 2016 report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on Syria, which very clearly sets forth the country's needs in terms of making progress in its reconstruction and describes how the United Nations can help and is helping. Russia is one of the leading donors to UNDP projects in Syria.

The approaches to the humanitarian situation in Syria display a very serious methodological flaw. In order to eliminate this flaw, one has to accept that the issue of humanitarian assistance to Syria cannot be reduced to the issue of blockages and hard-to-reach regions. The reality is that most of the people who need assistance live in areas that are controlled by the Government. Special attention must be paid to regions that have been liberated from fighters, in particular those settlements where local truce agreements have been reached. We cannot share the negative assessment of this kind of practice. Those who criticize the practice should not forget that as result of our efforts on local truces, we have managed to save tens of thousands of human lives. Furthermore, peaceful inhabitants are returning to those regions.

The agenda is now focused on de-mining and on ensuring that the infrastructure functions normally and that social services and facilities are in place and available. In order to improve the quality and volume of humanitarian access, normal working contact with Syrian authorities at various levels is needed, as acknowledged by many United Nations personnel. We have been very active to that end. However, Russia's capacity in this area is not unlimited, especially since as can be seen in today's meeting, we are not exactly supported by everyone here. Others need to establish normal working contacts with the Syrian Government. We think that a special role could be played here by the humanitarian troika of the Security Council since it decided to work on this difficult matter.

The description of the incident that took place in Khan Shaykhun cannot withstand scrutiny. The main problem today is that neither the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons nor the Joint Investigative Mechanism have taken the steps necessary to carry out their mandate, including by sending specialists to Khan Shaykoun and the Shairat air base, even though we raised the issue with them. Damascus is ready to work with them but, despite the fact that it has been brought up, the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/445) does not say a word about the issue.

On another note, the report says that the last route into eastern Ghouta was closed in late April, but we were told long ago that this region had been completely blocked. The difficulties with delivering supplies to Damascus suburbs have been intentionally exaggerated, following the direction of fighters associated with terrorist groups and non-governmental organizations that are at their beck and call, including the infamous White Helmets, in order to exert additional pressure on the authorities in Damascus.

But the activities carried out by the White Helmets are very well known to the United Nations and in the region. It turns out, for example, that the the hospitals and clinics that many non-governmental organizations have claimed to have been destroyed are intact and working. The Al-Wafidin corridor has allowed for the provision of food supplies, which has caused the prices for foodstuffs at local markets to drop considerably. It is the constant clashes among illegal groups that are hindering humanitarian activity, inflicting suffering on innocent people.

How long will we have to wait before those who support and train the Syrian armed opposition can knock some sense into those people? We cannot help but be worried by the fact that we are seeing a rising number of victims among civilians in the areas controlled by the United States-led opposition. If they promote fairness and justice, why did they fail to mention that?

We have pointed out the illegal nature of these operations on many occasions. They violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, which we have strongly emphasized in many Security Council resolutions. We cannot agree with the approach of some of our partners to humanitarian situations in hot spots of the Middle East. One set of ideas is applied when considering Syria, a completely different set of ideas when it comes to Iraq, and yet a third set for Yemen. What does this mean? Does it mean that different kinds of people live in Middle East? Are there three different classes of citizens living there? Let us at least be honest.

I must state in conclusion that regardless of the tenor of our meetings, whether it is an acute polemic or legendary diplomatic politeness, our Western partners exploit these public meetings to make unjustified accusations against us, which verges on insulting. The only question we hear is: What should Russia do about Syria? What we are doing is obvious, overt and known to all. We constantly inform the Council about what we are doing. Why do our colleagues not report to the Security Council about what their countries are doing to bring a political settlement closer?

We call once again on Council members to refrain from the kind of fruitless and inappropriate rhetoric whose rules Council members have flouted when flinging unacceptable provocations on us and other countries. We propose instead that we concentrate on making specific contributions to ending the war in Syria and assisting in its reconstruction. We stand ready to work together there.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Uruguay.

Since we joined the Security Council last year, our delegation has maintained that, as elected members of the Council, it is our responsibility to provide our opinion before the membership at all briefings. This is why we are very pleased that, this afternoon, all the other members of the Security Council chose to speak in public about the situation in Syria. I must confess that we were left with a bitter aftertaste when this morning (see S/PV.7954), as we discussed Yemen — a humanitarian tragedy that in terms of scale is of even greater magnitude — only two delegations expressed their opinion before the membership.

We thank Under-Secretary-General Mr. Stephen O'Brien for his comprehensive briefing, and we recognize and thank him once again for his continued efforts and those of his entire team deployed in the field in difficult conditions, who risk their lives on a daily basis to try to help the civilian population of Syria.

There is little left to say about the Syrian conflict that has not been said previously in this Chamber. Uruguay's position has been clear and consistent since we became elected members of the Council last year; if members pay attention, they will recognize phrases and expressions that have already been used on numerous occasions in the past. However, our primary objective is and must continue to be reaching a political solution, which will make it possible to put an end to this crisis and put a peaceful transition on track in Syria, one that is negotiated by all Syrians and with the support of the international community.

To that end, we trust in the good offices of Special Envoy Mr. Staffan de Mistura, in order to pursue the rounds of intra-Syrian negotiations in Geneva, which will gradually make it possible to reach common points to give shape to a new political chapter in Syria. We believe that the Astana process is also critical as we seek to reduce the levels of violence in the Syrian territory. We support the guarantors' efforts to consolidate the ceasefire and gradually extend it to other parts of the country. However, we are concerned that the United Nations is not participating in this initiative, which would provide guarantees of respect for essential principles of international humanitarian law, such as the prohibition of forced displacements and the freedom of movement to enter and leave the so-called safe zones.

Of course, the political process and the end of hostilities are only two of the steps to ensure that the page is turned in Syria. The third and equally important step is the humanitarian aspect. Despite some improvements in access, we are still very far away from an encouraging result, which would make it possible to allieviate the suffering of the Syrian civilian population. We must not forget the millions of refugees and displaced people who sooner or later will have to return to their homes or what is left of them. We continue to call for immediate, sustained and unimpeded access to all besieged and hard to reach areas. However, the priority objective should be the lifting of all sieges, which is unjustifiable in the twenty-first century.

For Uruguay, the protection of civilians in Syria and in any other conflict is an absolute priority. It is immoral to distinguish between civilians because they support one side or other another or because they are located in a certain area controlled by one or another of those parties. The provision of justice for the hundreds of thousands of innocent victims of this conflict is essential for lasting peace in Syria and for this country and all its people to overcome the horrors of this war. As long as we cannot ensure accountability for the serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, which have been committed by all parties to the conflict since 2011, those responsible will feel that they can continue committing them with impunity. This applies both to Syria and Yemen.

That is why Uruguay supported the creation of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, and hopes that it will soon be able to begin its work. We also support the request of the Secretary-General for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court. Similarly, my delegation believes that the same thing should be done with the situation in Yemen.

April was a particularly difficult month for Syrian civilians, first with the chemical weapon attack in Khan Shaykhun and a few days ago with the brutal attack on civilians being evacuated in the framework of the four towns agreement. We still do not know who was behind both incidents, which were war crimes. We trust that those reponsible will be quickly identified so that they may be brought to justice. With regard to local ceasefire agreements, we reiterate that any evacuation that takes place must ensure the security of civilians, the provision of humanitarian assistance and create the conditions for people who wish do so to return to their homes as quickly as possible.

One year after the adoption of resolution 2286 (2016), we continue to witness the destruction of hospitals and health centers in Syria. It is outrageous that the parties have flouted its provisions, depriving thousands of people of the right to medical care and leading to hundreds of victims among medical and health-care staff. This practice is repeated in schools, markets and all kinds of civilian infrastructure. We condemn these attacks in Syria, Yemen and wherever they may take place. They are war crimes and those responsible must be identified and brought to justice.

In conclusion, Uruguay affirms that the full and effective implementation of some measures, such as the consolidation of the cessation of hostilities, the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and the easing of bureaucratic processes for humanitarian access, which can make a great difference in the life of the Syrian people for whom the Council has been demanding concrete action to be taken on a monthly basis. We trust that, as on previous occasions, the Council can overcome its differences and take its responsibility for international peace and security.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Mounzer** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I hope that you, Mr. President, will be patient and listen to our comments on the briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

The Government of my country has considered the thirty-ninth monthly report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/445). It expresses its concern and regret over the approach of the report's authors, which in many aspects reflects the positions of certain States, parties and Governments that deliberately distort reality and deny the basic causes for the situation and humanitarian crisis in Syria, and the emergence and spread of armed terrorist groups with the support, financing and guidance of known Governments.

These Governments — some of which, unfortunately, are permanent members of the Security Council — impose unilateral economic measures against the Syrian people in order to bring pressure to bear on the people by denying them various basic resources necessary for a decent life. In this regard, I note that this morning the Government of my country has addressed two identical letters to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council containing its detailed response to the report.

The Government of my country finds it strange that the authors of the report, who should focus on humanitarian issues, continue to include issues that have nothing to do with humanitarian affairs and do not reflect the reality on the ground. Allow me to share some key observations of the Syrian Government on some of this erroneous information.

The authors of the report insist on sending political messages adopted by the Governments of certain countries. They accuse the Syrian Government of laying siege to areas of Syria. The entire Syrian people is under siege and exhausted on both the living humanitarian levels, due to the unilateral economic measures imposed by the Governments of certain Member States — led by the United States and the European Union — that shed crocodile tears and bemoan the situation of the Syrian people.

As for the areas that the United Nations has classified as under siege, the Organization is operating under erroneous information. Rather, armed terrorist groups that lay siege to those areas use civilians as human shields and deny them the humanitarian aid they are sent. Those groups sell humanitarian provisions at exorbitant prices — in Aleppo, for example. The report uses the term "forced displacement" to describe national reconciliation measures being implemented in large swaths of Syria — a dangerous posture that reflects the positions of Governments that continue to insist on covering for and protecting armed terrorist groups in Syria. Those national reconciliation measures have restored security, stability and normalcy to many Syrian towns and cities. In that regard, we stress that the reconciliation efforts are transparent operations through which the Government offers armed groups the option to lay down their weapons and regularize their status without any legal charges brought against them or they can relocate to another area. That does not apply to civilians, of course, who can go back to their daily lives after the armed groups leave. We do not yet know why some senior officials of the Secretariat feel concerned about Syrians regaining their homes, security and normal lives.

My Government regrets that the authors of the report have adopted, fully and in a biased way, the American version regarding the use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has repeatedly made clear its principled position rejecting the use of chemical weapons or toxic chemicals, which is considered to be a crime against humanity and an immoral, heinous act that cannot be justified in any circumstance for any reason or anywhere. We reiterate that we have not used chemical materials in our war against terrorism. The incident in Khan Shaykhun was contrived by terrorist groups, led by the Al-Nusrah Front, with the guidance and support of the Governments of some States, in order for Syria to take the blame for the use of such weapons.

The authors of the report insist on remaining silent on the catastrophic consequences of the illegal air strikes carried out by the self-styled international coalition. Those strikes have targeted infrastructure such as dams, bridges, hospitals, schools and oil facilities. Moreover, it is well known in the Council and to world public opinion, that such arbitrary strikes in northern and eastern Syria have claimed dozens of innocent civilian victims. We also regret that the Secretariat continuously promotes the actions of that coalition and deliberately turns a blind eye to the illegal nature of the coalition and the fact that it is violating international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The coalition was not created at the request of the Syrian Government or pursuant to a Security Council resolution.

The authors of the report continuously try to justify the aggression of the Turkish military regime — which backs some armed terrorist groups in Syria — against the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic. It is therefore quite odd that the report states that Turkey's closing of the Nusaybin/Qamishli border crossing is but temporary and for security reasons, whereas in fact the closure began in December 2015 and only seeks to increase the suffering of the population of the Hasakah governorate.

The Government of Syria has to date provided its people with around 75 per cent of its humanitarian needs. We reaffirm our steadfast policy to ensure the provision of humanitarian aid and to meet the needs of Syrian citizens everywhere, without any discrimination. Thus, we have welcomed the proposal put forward by the United Nations and the Government of Japan to facilitate regular monthly humanitarian convoys.

I would also like to make certain observations on the humanitarian situation.

First of all, my Government again stresses the obligation of the United Nations to coordinate with it, in a spirit of partnership and cooperation, all aspects of the humanitarian efforts with Syria. We must not submit to the political agendas of certain Member States or to the demands and allegations of other actors, which the authors of the report erroneously identify as "local authorities".

Secondly, the authors of the report must hold the Al-Nusrah Front terrorist group and its allied armed terrorist groups responsible for blocking humanitarian aid because those groups target peaceful residential areas, block vital roads, besiege several locations and use civilians as human shields.

Thirdly, the Syrian Government rejects the allegations and accusations levelled against it by the authors of the report concerning procedural and logistical measures concerning the delivery of humanitarian aid to unstable zones. We reaffirm that we comply with all agreements on the provision of

aid, including medical supplies, to civilians in need. Moreover, we want to ensure accuracy in determining the number of people who receive that aid, and that the supplies do not end up in terrorist hands. Additionally, the Syrian Government has facilitated the delivery of more than 15 humanitarian convoys in April and May, in keeping with the monthly humanitarian convey agreement. We will continue to make efforts to ensure that more convoys can reach those zones.

Fourthly, the authors of the report do not address the failures of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Syria, which deliberately delays the operations of the convoys, allows the delivery of aid to some zones on a monthly basis to the exclusion of others, and refuses humanitarian access to zones requested by the Syrian Government. Moreover, the Office does not provide accurate numbers of the convoys that are being organized every month in order to underplay the role and efforts of the Syrian Government. Additionally, the Office and the authors of the report purposefully avoid mentioning the joint International Committee of the Red Cross-Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoys, and they include neither the actual numbers of convoys being organised based on prior approvals, nor the number of people benefiting from them.

Fifthly, the authors of the report cite the tragedy of civilians who fled Foah and Kafraya in a narrative way that it is far from describing the scale of that crime, despite the fact that the terrorist bombing of their buses in the Rashidin area in Aleppo city on 15 April claimed the lives of dozens of women and children and destroyed dozens of ambulances and buses that could not be replaced due to the economic siege imposed by Governments of certain Member States upon Syria.

Sixthly, the report continues to promote cross-border aid, most of which falls into the hands of the terrorist groups that are rampant in the areas, where such aid arrives.

The people of Syria continue to be the victims of the lies and hypocrisy within the Security Council espoused by the same group of States that do not wish to see an end to the crisis in Syria but want to continue to manage and invest in terrorism and in armed terrorist groups and impose an economic blockade on the Syrian people.

I now address my comments to the representative of the United States, who claimed earlier today that she was speaking on behalf of a Syrian refugee in Turkey. I speak here on behalf of millions of Syrians inside and outside Syria, who call on the Governments f France, the United States and the United Kingdom and on the Governments of regimes that support terrorism in Syria to stop exploiting the Syrian crisis to achieve their political schemes at the expense of the Syrians' interests. I call on them to lift the economic blockade on the Syrian people and to end air strikes on cities, the destruction of infrastructure and the targeting of civilians under the pretext of combating Da'esh, and to stop making up fictitious stories that are similar to cheap Hollywood movies.

I remind the United States representative and her colleague from France that the media in their two countries have questioned the fabricated evidence provided by the two countries on about the situation in Sednaya and Khan Shaykhun, yet no one has questioned the fact that the aircraft of the so-called international coalition kill hundreds of innocent civilians in Syria and Iraq.

Finally, my country, Syria, will continue to play a constructive role to ensure that the Astana and Geneva meetings are successful, in the context of its involvement in any genuine effort to put an end to the blood bath in Syria and to terrorism, and that will help us to find a political solution, on the basis of intra-Syrian dialogue, led by the Syrian people, without foreign interference or preconditions.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

Since this is the final meeting under the Uruguayan presidency of the Security Council, I would first like to thank my colleagues at the Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations. Without their support, we would not have been able to achieve so much during our presidency. It is the unseen workers at the permanent missions who make it possible for the Permanent Representatives and the Deputy Permanent Representatives to conduct their work. They provide much needed support, day after day, throughout the year, but in particular when a country holds the presidency of the Council. I sincerely thank and acknowledge them all.

Secondly, I would like to thank all of the Permanent Representatives present and their delegations for having made our work as easy as possible this month. I would also like to thank the Council secretariat for the technical and organizational support they continue to provide. I also thank the security personnel, whom we do not see but who nonetheless are part of our work. I would like to thank the sound engineers and all of the staff working in the Chamber and the consultations room. Last but far from least, I would like to thank our interpreters and translators, who are absolutely indispensable to our work.

I know that I speak on behalf of the entire Security Council in wishing the best of luck to the Plurinational State of Bolivia when it assumes the presidency of the Council in June.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.*

United Nations S/PV.7956

Security Council

Distr: General
1 June 2016

Original: English

# Official communiqué of the 7956th (closed) meeting of the Security Council

## Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 1 June 2016, at 3 p.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

"On 1 June 2017, the Security Council, pursuant to annex II, sections A and B of resolution 1353 (2001), held its 7956th meeting in private with the troop- and police-contributing countries to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

"The President invited Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in the meeting in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

"The Security Council and the troop- and police-contributing countries heard a briefing by Mr. Wane.

"Members of the Council, Mr. Wane and representatives of participating contributing countries had an exchange of views."

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United Nations S/PV.7957

# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

**7957**th meeting
Friday, 2 June 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

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|---|---|---|
| *President*: | Mr. Llorentty Solíz | (Bolivia (Plurinational State of)) |
| *Members*: | China | Mr. Liu Jieyi |
| | Egypt | Mr. Aboulatta |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | France | Mr. Delattre |
| | Italy | Mr. Cardi |
| | Japan | Mr. Kawamura |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Umarov |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Iliichev |
| | Senegal | Mr. Seck |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skau |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Yelchenko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Wilson |
| | United States of America | Mr. Gee |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Bermúdez |

## Agenda

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Expression of sympathy following the terrorist attack in Kabul**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the members of the Security Council, I condemn in the strongest terms the reprehensible terrorist attack perpetrated in Kabul on innocent civilians of Afghanistan and of many other nations. The members of the Security Council extend their deepest sympathy to the families of the victims who lost their lives, and solidarity to the people and Government of Afghanistan. Please stand for a moment of silence in honour of the victims.

**Expression of thanks to the outgoing President**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first public meeting of the Security Council for the month of June, I should like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Security Council, to pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. Elbio Rosselli, Permanent Representative of Uruguay, for his service as President of the Council for the month of May. I am sure I speak for all members of the Security Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Rosselli and his delegation for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

**Congratulatory remarks to the newly elected members**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I should also like to take this opportunity to sincerely congratulate Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru and Poland on their election as non-permanent members of the Security Council. We look forward with interest to their contribution to the work of the Council starting in 2018.

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in Côte d'Ivoire**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Côte d'Ivoire to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Marcel Amon-Tanoh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Aïchatou Mindaoudou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mindaoudou.

**Ms. Mindaoudou** (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the members of the Security Council for giving me the opportunity to brief the Council, on behalf of the Secretary-General, on the most recent report on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire.

Today is a historic one in relations between Côte d'Ivoire and the Security Council. It is historic because it marks the removal of Côte d'Ivoire from the Council's agenda. It is also historic because Côte d'Ivoire was elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for a two-year mandate, which will begin in January 2018.

Let me warmly congratulate His Excellency Mr. Marcel Amon-Tanoh, Minister for Foreign Affairs, on Côte d'Ivoire's election to the Security Council.

Since I last briefed the Security Council in February (see S/PV.7880), a new Government has assumed power following legislative elections held in December 2016. The Senate is being established. What is remarkable is that for the first time in Côte d'Ivoire's political history, the three main political parties — Rassemblement des républicains (RDR), the Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire and the Front populaire ivoirien (FPI) — all took part in and fielded candidates in the elections. It should be recalled that the legislative elections of 2000 were boycotted by the RDR and those of 2011 by the FPI. The latter boycott led to an increased presence of the RDR in the National Assembly, which gave an absolute majority to the ruling coalition of Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix. Although the FPI opposition party won only four seats of deputies in the elections in 2016, its leaders were clear on their intentions to fully play their roles as deputies. Such commitment is positive for democracy in Côte d'Ivoire.

In February, I told the Council that the security situation was generally stable despite the recurring movements of soldiers in January and February. Since my last briefing to the Council, similar movements took place on 12 and 14 May, when a faction of the Bouaké-based armed forces, mostly former members of the Forces nouvelles de Côte d'Ivoire, claimed payment for its participation in the resolution of the 2010-2011 post-election crisis. Those disruptions have spread to several parts of the country, causing the death of one person and injuring more than 20. On 22 and 23 May, demobilized ex-combatants of the Forces nouvelles, previously considered to be allies to the army, erected barricades and demonstrated in Bouaké and other parts of the country, calling for financial compensation from the Government. Three ex-combatants were killed during the confrontation with the police. Those two movements totally paralysed economic activities, particularly in Bouaké. During the incidents of 12 and 14 May, a large cache of weapons was discovered, thereby reviving, both internally and externally, a certain psychosis of armed violence.

In February, I felt that the soldiers' movements did not threaten the institutions or stability of the country and did not wish to resort to violence because the claims put forth by the soldiers were merely financial. That assessment remains unchanged. However, things have changed somewhat since the incidents that occurred in May. This time, the soldiers attacked civilians and certain political symbols. The recurrence of military movements confirms the residual challenges that remain to be met before we can consolidate the achievements of peacekeeping in Côte d'Ivoire. Those challenges were identified and documented in the special report of the Secretary-General of March 2016 (S/2016/297), which recommended the closure of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), and in the Secretary-General's February report on Côte d'Ivoire (S/2017/89).

It is urgent that the Government, with the support of its partners, improve discipline within the armed forces and implement the reforms provided for by the 2016-2020 Military Planning Law. It is also imperative to ensure the full integration of ex-combatants into society. These incidents highlight, on the one hand the threats posed by impunity within the armed forces and, on the other, the imperative of ending impunity for human rights violations committed during the post-election crisis by the two parties in conflict, as well as the need for impartial justice.

However, the situation I have just described should not make us lose sight of the achievements of more than 14 years of peacekeeping made possible by bilateral, regional and international support. In April 2004, when UNOCI was deployed, Côte d'Ivoire was a country divided in two along a security zone policed by forces of the United Nations and the French. Violations of the ceasefire and serious violations of human rights were recurrent. Since the end of the post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire in 2011, significant progress has been made in all sectors. The political environment has improved, although much remains to be done, particularly in the areas of national reconciliation and social cohesion. The situations of human rights and transitional justice have progressed, albeit in an uneven and hesitant manner. Economic growth is continuing and steps need to be taken to ensure the equitable sharing of resources so that all sectors of society benefit from the dividends of peace. The security situation has greatly improved, but efforts have still to be made to establish responsible security forces that enjoy the trust of the population.

In just four weeks, on 30 June, UNOCI's closure will be official. This process has not been without challenges when we consider the two-month liquidation period granted by the Council. I am pleased to inform the Council that, in spite of everything, we are keeping to the 30 June deadline of closing the mission. All uniformed personnel left Côte d'Ivoire in February. The gradual reduction of the civilian staff was completed in April, and today only a reduced team of eight civilians remain in the Mission's core and liquidation teams. ONUCI's FM radio station was transferred to the Félix Houphouët Boigny Foundation for Peace Research in Yamoussoukro. It is broadcasting today as the Radio of Peace. Of the 63 UNOCI sites, 61 have been returned to their respective owners. Most of the mission's equipment has been removed from our books and their final disposal or destruction is under way. The liquidation process was conducted in strict compliance with the environmental standards set by the Secretariat.

Some members of the Council have asked me what lessons I have learned from experience in Côte d'Ivoire that might be useful in other contexts in which peacekeeping missions are deployed. In that regard, I

should like to highlight three essential lessons that I consider important to share.

The first lesson I would like to address is the most important. A peacekeeping operation can achieve its objectives and withdraw from a country only in a context in which the Government is a determined partner deeply committed to assuming its responsibilities to the people it serves. No peacekeeping mission can substitute for national political will and national efforts to resolve the problems that led to the conflict. There is no doubt that much remains to be done in order to meet all the remaining challenges, but Côte d'Ivoire has demonstrated its resolve to assume the responsibilities necessary for the country to return to its former position as the torchbearer of West Africa for peace, stability and economic prosperity.

The second lesson relates to the leadership of the Council. I would point to the risks that the Council was able to take that led to the success of UNOCI, starting with the strong political mandate bestowed upon my predecessors and myself and supported by the trust of the Security Council. In addition, the Council has been very supportive of inter-mission cooperation, allowing us to maximize the strategic and operational interdependence of neighbouring peacekeeping missions. The rapid reaction force established within UNOCI, with the potential to intervene in Liberia in support of mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, is certainly one of the most progressive inter-agency cooperation initiatives in the history of United Nations peacekeeping. Where necessary, the Council has also been proactive in adjusting the successive mandates of UNOCI, based on regular assessments conducted by the Secretariat, in order to prevent the mission from bogging down.

The third and final lesson that I draw from UNOCI's experience is that a United Nations peacekeeping mission is much more likely to succeed in a context where there is a coalition of international partners working to achieve the same goal of peace, essentially in a policy framework with enhanced and concerted accountability measures. The foundation of UNOCI's success is based on many pillars: African Union mediation, the Economic Community of West African States deployment of peacekeeping troops that later become peacekeepers, advocacy by women members of the civil society organizations of the Mano River Union, the parallel deployment of French forces and the commitment of bilateral and multilateral partners.

Allow me to express my appreciation for the important role played by the Council in the return of peace to Côte d'Ivoire, including through the deployment of a peacekeeping mission. I salute the memory of all those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of UNOCI and express my gratitude to all troop- and police-contributing countries. My appreciation also goes to all UNOCI civilian and uniformed personnel who have served our mission with professionalism, dedication and a deep sense of duty to fulfil our mandate. It has been a great honour for me to have collaborated with those women and men. I also thank the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes whose role in Côte d'Ivoire has been and will continue to be essential.

I am also grateful to the regional, bilateral and multilateral partners whose contribution has enabled the United Nations to successfully close the chapter on peacekeeping in Côte d'Ivoire. Their unflagging support is key to consolidating lasting peacekeeping gains.

Last but not least, I would like to express my deep gratitude and my great admiration for the people and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire at all levels — local, regional and national. In reality, they were the determining factor for resolving the crisis and the conflict in their country. I am convinced that the daily, personal and collective investment of each Ivorian will make it possible to sustainably consolidate our hard-won peace.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Mindaoudou for her briefing.

I now give the floor to those members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Delattre** (France) (*spoke in French*): Today's meeting is exceptional and historic. Indeed, it is rare for the Security Council to meet on the occasion of closing a peacekeeping mission. Yet, we are here doing just that for the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), which will be phased out by 30 June, under resolution 2284 (2016).

I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her briefing and especially for her work at the head of UNOCI over the past four years which, together with the work of her predecessor, has enabled us to reach this point today. France is very grateful.

This meeting is rendered even more historic as it follows the brilliant election in the General Assembly, this morning, of Côte d'Ivoire as a Security Council member for the biennium 2018-2019. Through its Minister for Foreign Affairs, I would like to warmly congratulate Côte d'Ivoire on its election. Its experience in peacekeeping will provide the Council a unique perspective to help us more effectively tackle the challenges of the world. We welcome the opportunity to work alongside Côte d'Ivoire over the next two years in our pursuit of international peace and security.

The upcoming departure of UNOCI is a turning point for Côte d'Ivoire, as it is for peacekeeping. We must take this opportunity to review the past, evaluate the present and prepare for the future.

First, we must assess our accomplishments in Côte d'Ivoire and draw lessons from them. In 28 days, UNOCI will close after more than 13 years of existence. At the height of the 2010-2011 crisis it consisted of approximately 11,000 uniformed personnel. I pay a special tribute to all UNOCI personnel — soldiers, policemen and civilians — who, over the years, have devoted themselves to the pursuit of peace and security in Côte d'Ivoire. I honour the memory of the 150 men and women who lost their lives in the course of that mission. Their sacrifice will never be forgotten.

UNOCI stood by the country through a complex trajectory, marked by the acute crisis from 2004 to 2011, but also accompanied by the hope of renewal and the successful recovery starting in 2011. We must draw useful peacekeeping lessons from such a resounding success. Several factors have helped over the years. First of all, the Council gave UNOCI a clear and flexible mandate which was adapted to on developments on the ground. Difficulties were met with a strengthened mandate and personnel increases. When the crisis abated, the Council transitioned UNOCI to best enable long-term stability. The Council also developed new tools adapted to the needs on the ground, such as the rapid reaction force.

Secondly, since its inception, UNOCI also participated in the political process which, pitfalls notwithstanding, provided it a clear road map, including an electoral timetable. The unity of the Council also provided UNOCI with the necessary support in order for it to carry out its mandate.

Thirdly, UNOCI has always enjoyed the united support of the international community. The United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and the bilateral and multilateral partners of Côte d'Ivoire came together in tense times. France also did its part, primarily through its ongoing support for UNOCI, under a Council mandate, through the French forces it deployed to Côte d'Ivoire throughout that period.

Finally, and importantly, UNOCI has enjoyed an excellent relationship with the host country based on trust and the pursuit of peace. It is an example to follow. That relationship has been an essential prerequisite to ensuring an effective transition.As a result, Côte d'Ivoire has now fully taken its destiny into its own hands. Today's Côte d'Ivoire has made great progress; it is no longer the deeply divided — politically and territorially — country of 2004 or 2011. Democratic life in the country has become normalized and strengthened; economic growth is contributing to its development; the security situation continues to improve, including at the border; and the country is a major player in its subregion in all areas. The people and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire have demonstrated their determination to continue that positive trend. They are now fully responsible for that transition.

Côte d'Ivoire is now in a position to continue moving forward. As the Council recalled in resolution 2284 (2016), this means we need to continue to address the important challenges that remain, and as the Special Representative has pointed out, the last few months have highlighted in particular the need to finalize the security sector reform and reintegrate the ex-combatants. This is an imperative for ensuring lasting stability in the country.

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire has clearly expressed its determination to tackle these issues and to complete professionalizing its security forces. We welcome and support this commitment just as we support the announcement of the strengthening of the country's participation in peacekeeping. This decision represents a way of organizing what is to come. We welcome its first illustration with the deployment under way of an Ivorian contingent within the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

We also welcome the actions taken by the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to strengthen social cohesion, which need to continue. The fight against impunity is also a constant imperative, particularly

with regard to the crimes committed during the post-election crisis. Only fair and equitable justice, which judges violations regardless of who are their perpetrators, will be able to consolidate and sustain the stabilization of the country. Progress in this area, nationally as well as in cooperation with the International Criminal Court, will be decisive for the purpose of lasting reconciliation.

The closure of UNOCI does not mean, however, that the country will be left alone to face the challenges that persist. As many other States do, Côte d'Ivoire will continue to benefit from the support of the United Nations through several channels. The agencies, funds and programmes operating on its territory assembled within the country team will continue to help with the country's recovery. Identifying the priority areas within the action plan signed with the Government in 2016 is particularly useful in this regard. We call on international donors to support the country team in this undertaking. The United Nations will also continue to support Côte d'Ivoire as will its neighbours through the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, whose mandate covers the entire subregion. Côte d'Ivoire should also be able to count on the constant commitment of its bilateral and multilateral partners in all fields.

Thanks to the strong links between our two countries in all areas, France is committed to Côte d'Ivoire. We will continue to support the country in its economic and social development, as well as in capacity-building, particularly in security and defence, through bilateral cooperation. We will also continue to support the deep and constant engagement of the European Union with Côte d'Ivoire.

When the conditions are right, the best legacy a peacekeeping operation can leave behind is to pass the torch to the host country in order to anchor long-term stability. This is the meaning of our meeting today on Côte d'Ivoire. We are very happy about this for Côte d'Ivoire, for the Security Council and for the United Nations.

**Mr. Seck** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I align myself with the words of the President in condemning the terrorist attacks in Kabul. In so doing, I wish to reiterate the condolences of Senegal to the families of the victims and to the people and the Government of Afghanistan.

The Senegalese delegation would like to congratulate Bolivia on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We also wish to warmly congratulate the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire, as well as the delegations of Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Poland and Peru on their outstanding election this morning as non-permanent members of the Security Council for the biennium 2018-2019.

Through the Ivorian Minister for Foreign Affairs here with us today and his delegation, I wish to reiterate the warmest congratulations of Senegal to Côte d'Ivoire on its brilliant election to the Security Council. To Ms. Mindaoudou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), the Senegalese delegation offers its congratulations both for her comprehensive briefing and, above all, for the remarkable manner in which she fulfilled mission in our sister country of Côte d'Ivoire and helped it achieve stability.

Ms. Mindaoudou's briefing allows me to dispense with revisiting the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, but like other speakers who have preceded me I would like to state that today, 2 June, is clearly and truly historic and rich in symbols for our sister Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, which this morning was elected a non-permanent member of the Security Council and then comes to the Council this afternoon for a final briefing on the end of the United Nations Mission there. With its experience as a host country of a United Nations mission, which is, as Ms. Mindaoudou said, a success story in all respects, Côte d'Ivoire is leaving the agenda of the Security Council and coming to sit at the table of this body to make a significant contribution to the work of the Council for the next two years.

We believe that the political resolve of the senior authorities in Côte d'Ivoire, which has so far prevailed, will persevere and grow stronger in addressing the remaining challenges, particularly in the security field. In our view, the implementation and operationalization of the law on military programming will be a decisive step in this direction, as it will strengthen training and discipline within the Ivorian army. With regard to the threat posed by the spread of violent extremism and terrorism in the subregion, the action of the Ivorian authorities, working in close cooperation with neighbouring countries, to strengthen the measures taken against this increasing threat to subregion is warmly welcomed.

We must be sure to consolidate and entrench the gains made in the stabilizing Côte d'Ivoire. To that end, alongside the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations country team, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the United Nations and all bilateral and multilateral partners must remain watchful and continue supporting Côte d'Ivoire in its efforts to make peace permanent. In this regard, the delegation of Senegal welcomes the United Nations country team's effort to draft a $50-million joint peacebuilding programme following the departure of UNOCI.

I cannot conclude without paying well-deserved tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Aïchatou Mindaoudou. Obviously, the commitment of my country has been constant, in particular through the rapid intervention force and the aviation unit that we deployed within UNOCI, and through the ceasefire agreement of 17 October 2002 between the mutineers and the loyalists mediated by Senegal.

In conclusion, I would like to invite the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Mr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, to continue following the situation in Côte d'Ivoire as part of his regional mandate.

**Mr. Kawamura** (Japan): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mindaoudou for her comprehensive briefing. I would also like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Marcel Amon-Tanoh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, to the Council. It is a pleasure to have him in the Chamber for this final briefing on the successful completion of the 14-year mission of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).

Please allow me to commend Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mindaoudou and all UNOCI staff, past and present, including those who lost their lives, for their dedication to supporting a better future for Côte d'Ivoire. The country has made great progress in consolidating its economic and security gains. The result of the Security Council election this morning symbolizes and affirms these achievements.

The 14 years of activity of UNOCI offer a rich storehouse of lessons on peacekeeping. While the magnitude and complexity of issues may differ, the Council should continue to apply lessons from Côte d'Ivoire to its ongoing work on peacekeeping, especially in Africa. In particular, UNOCI has demonstrated that comprehensive and nationally owned security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are key tools for successful peace processes, as well as for preventing the recurrence of conflicts.

We have also seen how unresolved disarmament, demobilization and reintegration issues, including incomplete socioeconomic reintegration of former soldiers, can impact even a well-designed security sector reform programme and improved security architecture. We are confident that Côte d'Ivoire will continue to enhance the professionalism and accountability of the security sector under the coordination of its National Security Council.

Côte d'Ivoire will not be alone in these tasks. Together with other international partners and the United Nations country team, Japan will continue to support Côte d'Ivoire's efforts in sustaining peace, but this month marks a milestone in Côte d'Ivoire's development.

I would like to conclude by, once again, congratulating UNOCI, as well as the people and Government of Côte d'Ivoire, on their achievements.

**Mr. Iliichev** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Aichatou Mindaoudou, for her comprehensive briefing on the internal political situation in the country and the conclusion of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).

We welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Amon-Tano, and we sincerely congratulate him on his country's election as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for 2018-2019. We wish his country every success in its cooperation on the issues on the Council's agenda. The rich experience of Ivorians in post-conflict reconstruction is of particular interest in that regard and I am sure they will share their experience with the international community.

We note the success of Yamoussoukro in the sphere of national reconciliation, State-building and promoting political reforms in the country. We want to underscore that the successful holding of a referendum at the end of last year on the new Constitution and of parliamentary elections confirmed the maturity of the

political forces in the country and their ability settle differences through peaceful means. Clearly, there is trend towards stability following the 2010 and 2011 electoral crises. In this regard, we note the contribution made by the Government, which took unprecedented measures to organize a political dialogue with the opposition. We hope that the authorities will continue to make serious efforts to increase the representation of women in governing bodies.

The Constitution's provisions on land, citizenship and national identity are promising and give us hope for a final elimination of the root causes of the conflict. We are confident that Yamoussoukro will soon overcome the challenges posed by outbreaks of social tension. We take note of the agreements reached between the country's authorities and ex-combatants who are integrated into the armed forces, which enabled them to quell the protests. In this regard, we urge the Ivorians to concentrate their efforts on addressing priority tasks, such as security sector reform; the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants programme; and the return of refugees from Liberia to the country. In addition, the processes of national reconciliation and of eliminating the dividing lines in society, including those related to victor's justice, must continue.

We must bear in mind that, in the West African region, terrorist groups have strengthened and we have been seeing occasional appearances of their emissaries in the north of the country, on the border with Mali. Côte d'Ivoire is also becoming a victim of terrorist attacks. In this regard, we urge Yamoussoukro to continue to place priority on the issues of security and illegal arms trafficking.

We greatly value Côte d'Ivoire's position on regional stability. We welcome sending the Ivorian military into the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. We hope that Côte d'Ivoire will also continue to be accountable and approach logistical issues responsibly. We cannot overstate its role there.

We note that the transfer of the remaining tasks from UNOCI to the United Nations country teams has been carried out in an orderly manner. We are happy that the withdrawal of the mission is in accordance with the time frame. In conclusion, we, once again, encourage our Ivorian partners to fully cooperate with the Council.

**Mr. Wilson** (United Kingdom): As this is our first public session in your presidency, I congratulate you, Mr. President, and wish you good luck. I would also like to thank Uruguay for its very efficient and open presidency last month.

I join others in thanking Special Representative Mindaoudou for her briefing and for her tireless efforts over the past years and for her commitment to a sustained peace. I also want to welcome the Foreign Minister of Côte d'Ivoire to the Council and we really look forward to hearing from him shortly.

We meet today at a significant moment for the Government and people of Côte d'Ivoire. By the end of the month, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) will close after 13 years of service. In that time, Côte d'Ivoire has been transformed. A child born when the first UNOCI peacekeeper set foot in Côte d'Ivoire would have entered a world of uncertainty and insecurity. Today, that child is living in a country with real prospects not just for peace, but also for opportunity and prosperity. I congratulate the Special Representative and all her team for all they have done to help make this a reality. UNOCI has been an exemplary operation, one that has enjoyed an excellent relationship with the Government and with civil society and, importantly, one that it is now leaving harmoniously and at the right moment.

As their mission nears its end, we must never forget that such stability did not come without cost; 150 military and civilian United Nations personnel have lost their lives in Côte d'Ivoire over the past 13 years. The legacy of their sacrifice and of all their service must be a sustained peace in Côte d'Ivoire. With that in mind, I congratulate the Government for capitalizing on the space that UNOCI has given them. The country now has one of the fastest growing economies in the world. We stand with it as it continues along this positive pathway redoubling its efforts to ensure that all Ivorians feel the benefits brought by peace through social development.

Progress in Côte d'Ivoire is not limited to just the economy. I also want to draw Council members attention to the Secretary-General's recently published report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2017/249), a topic that is of particular concern to the United Kingdom. With this report came the welcome news that the armed forces of Côte d'Ivoire have been delisted. That means that Côte d'Ivoire is now able to contribute

to United Nations peacekeeping missions, and it has recently sent a contingent to Mali. To move from a nation benefitting from a peacekeeping mission to one that now contributes to peacekeeping is yet another marker of success.

There can be no let up. There are tests ahead for Côte d'Ivoire. The 2015 presidential elections were peaceful, but of course UNOCI was present. The presidential elections in 2020 and a smooth democratic transfer of power to a new president will be crucial to building a peaceful and prosperous future for Côte d'Ivoire. This needs continued efforts to build the independence, credibility and authority of the electoral commission over the next two years. The credibility and legitimacy of the institutions of Government must continue to strengthen.

As the recent unrest in the country illustrates, peace can be fragile if underlying issues are not resolved. I therefore encourage the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to make the most of this opportunity that it and the United Nations have worked so hard for.

In conclusion, the story of Côte d'Ivoire is a positive one, with the end of a successful mission and an optimistic future for the country and its people. It is also a positive story for the United Nations and specifically for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. UNOCI shows how clear mandates with a clear exit strategy can create the space needed for the political process to progress. It is a model that we should seek to emulate elsewhere across the world. I am delighted that the experience is something that Côte d'Ivoire will be able to share on a daily basis with the Council when it joins in 2018. I congratulate the country on its election earlier today.

**Mr. Bermúdez** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to begin my statement by wishing you, Sir, and your team every success in your duties as your country presides over the Security Council during the month of June. I also sincerely thank Council members for commending us on our recently concluded presidency.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General,Ms. Aïchatou Mindaoudou, for her comprehensive briefing, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Marcel Amon-Tanoh, for being here today.

We take this opportunity to congratulate the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire on its recent election as a non-permanent member of the Security Council and we wish the country every success during its mandate. We also hope that the Security Council can benefit not only from Côte d'Ivoire's commitment to international peace and security, but also from its experience in successfully emerging from conflict with the support of a United Nations peacekeeping operation. Uruguay would also like to congratulate the Government and the people of Côte d'Ivoire on their achievements to date, which are, without a doubt, worthy of recognition.

Just over a year ago, in this very Chamber, we ended the Côte d'Ivoire sanctions regime (see S/PV.7681). That step was made possible by the progress that had paved the way for the country to embark on the path to peace and stability. There is no doubt that the country continues to face internal challenges, such as national reconciliation, the reintegration of former combatants and sustainable economic recovery, which must all be addressed and overcome by Ivoirians themselves.

The role of international partners will be key to assisting the country to address the root causes of underlying challenges. Nonetheless, we can proudly declare that Côte d'Ivoire is no longer a threat to international peace and security and that the Security Council has transferred all responsibility for achieving sustained peace in the country to its Government. A period of learning has begun, which will open up the possibility for a promising future for all Ivorians. The situation in Côte d'Ivoire would not have become a success story without the commitment and political will of its Government.

**Mr. Liu Jieyi** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Mindaoudou, for her briefing and welcome Foreign Minister Amon-Tanoh to today's meeting.

China congratulates Côte d'Ivoire on its election as a non-permanent member of the Council for the 2018-2019 term and looks forward to intensifying cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire in international affairs with a view to making joint contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security. In recent years, under the leadership of President Ouattara, Côte d'Ivoire has enjoyed political stability and sustained economic and social development, which China commends.

Last year, during China's presidency of the Security Council (see S/PV.7681), the Council adopted resolution 2284 (2016), on the drawdown of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), and resolution 2283 (2016), on the comprehensive lifting of sanctions against Côte d'Ivoire (see S/PV.7681). That fully reflected the affirmation of the Council and of the international community that there had been considerable improvement in the situation in Côte d'Ivoire. Since 2004, UNOCI has played an important role in maintaining peace and stability in the country. China commends the contribution of UNOCI and the positive efforts of Special Representative Mindaoudou since she assumed office. Following the closure of UNOCI, China hopes that the international community will continue to strengthen cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire with a view to helping the country achieve sustained peace, stability and development.

United Nations peacekeeping operations are an important means of maintaining international peace and security. UNOCI's successful experience is worth studying with a view to drawing lessons from it. Based on developments in the situation on the ground, China believes that the United Nations peacekeeping operation should make timely adjustments to its scale ahead of its final drawdown and closure. Meanwhile, it is imperative to fully respect the will of the host country and enhance coordination with countries in the region, as well as regional and subregional organizations.

Nine out of the sixteen United Nations peacekeeping missions are located in Africa. Peace and stability in Africa matter greatly to international peace and security. China has consistently supported Africa in resolving African issues through African means, as well as regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union, in playing an active role in resolving local issues. China stands ready to work with the international community to provide ownership and capacity-building assistance to Africa so as to make greater contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security.

**Mr. Cardi** (Italy) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Mindaoudou, for her briefing. We commend the progress made in preparing for the closure of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). I take this opportunity to thank Ms. Mindaoudou for her efforts and to congratulate her, the Secretariat and the UNOCI staff, who have all contributed to the mission's success for many years.

I would also like to recognize Minister Amon-Tanoh and congratulate him on his country's election to the Security Council for the 2018-2019 term, which is the culmination of Côte d'Ivoire's journey to stability over the years. I should also like to congratulate the other newly elected non-permanent members of the Security Council, in particular the Netherlands, with which we share a Security Council seat.

The stage we are at today is a precursor to the closure of the mission in Côte d'Ivoire, which is an important juncture in the country's recent history and that of United Nations peacekeeping operations in general. For Côte d'Ivoire, it reaffirms the journey to stability on which the country has embarked. Similarly, we commend the determination of the United Nations to remain committed to the country, through its political presence and coordination efforts under the regional office of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, because the outcome achieved by UNOCI is a legacy to be preserved.

We have closely followed recent political developments, which constitute a vital stage in the history of Côte d'Ivoire and in the changes made to its Constitution, once again highlighting the country's resolute commitment to democratic principles. Italy will continue to support the country on that path at the bilateral level, as well as in our work at the United Nations and in the European Union, which remains one of Côte d'Ivoire's main partners.

The stability of Côte d'Ivoire first and foremost meets the aspirations of the Ivoirian people, but it is also a priority for the international community. International and regional dynamics, especially in the area of security, require considerable commitment, in particular on the part of countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire, that have historically played the role of regional stabilizer. We would also wish to see Côte d'Ivoire play an active role in fighting the scourges threatening peace and security in the regional and Sahelian dimensions. In that regard, the fact that Côte d'Ivoire is again a troop-contributing country in Mali demonstrates the country's focus on the regional dynamic.

Moreover, the priorities on which the Ivorian candidacy for Council membership is based — such as the fight against terrorism, illegal trafficking, illicit immigration and piracy, as well as promoting

and protecting human rights — are in our view an important sign of that commitment. In that respect, I offer Côte d'Ivoire the full support of Italy in order to obtain these goals.

In recent months, we have on occasion wondered about the tools available to us to make peacekeeping operations more effective. The lesson to be drawn from the case of Côte d'Ivoire is that the leadership and unity of the Security Council, which the Council has demonstrated at considerable cost, are prerequisites to ensuring the success of peacekeeping operations, together with the commitment of the host country to do everything possible to pursue the goals of peace and stability. I am convinced that the direct experience that Côte d'Ivoire will be able to offer in terms of understanding the pluses and minuses of United Nations peacekeeping activities will add important value to its membership of the Security Council.

Today is Republic Day in Italy. I am happy that this day, which is a day of celebration for us, is also one on which Côte d'Ivoire has reached an important turning point in its history.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to welcome His Excellency, Mr. Marcel Amon-Tanoh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. I congratulate him on the well-deserved election of his country as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period 2018-2019 earlier today, which is of obvious significance.

Today, Côte d'Ivoire is turning the page and moving past its crisis once and for all. Côte d'Ivoire, a brotherly country, will, through its membership in the Council, once again play a deserved role in the international arena as a representative of the African continent and a defender of its people's interests. In that regard, I would like to assure the Minister that Egypt will continue to promote its ongoing cooperation and coordination with Côte d'Ivoire and provide the necessary support to the country as it fulfils its role.

Allow me also to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Aïchatou Mindaoudou, for her valuable briefing and appreciated efforts, and the civilian and military personnel of United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) for their hard work. They have played a pivotal role in leading to the current watershed moment. The Council celebrates this turning point as the peacekeeping mission ends in Côte d'Ivoire and the national authorities return to governing all of the country's affairs. Optimism prevails regarding a more stable and prosperous future at all political, economic and security levels.

UNOCI would not have been successful in achieving its goals had it not been for the national and popular political atmosphere, which facilitated a diligent approach to shaping Côte d'Ivoire's future. In addition, regional and international stakeholders unified their vision for Côte d'Ivoire, aware of their role in supporting Côte d'Ivoire in ending the crisis. They helped make it happen.

The successful closure of UNOCI is only the start of a new phase, anchored in peace and stability, that will help Côte d'Ivoire to achieve sustainable development. The successes in Côte d'Ivoire deserve to be celebrated, but the remaining challenges deserve our full attention. We are confident in the ability of the Ivorian Government and people to make further progress on their current path. However, the international community must also continue to provide necessary support.

In conclusion, the Council celebrates the closure of a success story that was not easy. The mission faced challenges, difficulties and failures. Had it not been for the determination of stakeholders to overcome such hurdles, we would not have reached this point today. We believe it important to draw lessons from UNOCI that will help us in dealing with similar crises. We therefore call on the Secretariat to conduct a comprehensive study of the role of the United Nations and the international community in the settlement of the Ivorian crisis. The study should include an objective analysis of the mandate and role of the peacekeeping operation, the contributions of political mediation, the effects of sanctions regimes, and all factors related to the international community's perspective with respect to the crisis.

Once again, I wish the people and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire success.

**Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia): Let me start by expressing my appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Aïchatou Mindaoudou, for her briefing and for the successful work that she and her team have carried out in order to ensure the successful completion of the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).

I would also like to thank His Excellency, Mr. Marcel Amon-Tanoh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. I take this opportunity to extend our warmest congraulations to him on the election of Côte d'Ivoire as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period of 2018-2019. I look forward to working closely with his country in the Council.

The closure of UNOCI marks a significant milestone, both for Côte d'Ivoire and for the United Nations. Over the past 13 years, UNOCI has worked to promote the rule of law, national reconciliation, security sector reform, the protection of civilians and human rights in Côte d'Ivoire, thereby contributing to the restoration of peace and stability in the country. We hope that the experience of UNOCI will provide useful lessons for similar missions in the future. Without a doubt, the progress made over the past 13 years would not have been possible without the active participation of the people and Government of Côte d'Ivoire. The leadership and commitment of the Government to undertake necessary reform should be commended.

We are confident that the efforts of the Government aimed at fostering greater unity and national reconciliation will continue. Without a doubt, the need for greater unity and national reconciliation have been made self-evident by recent developments. The country certainly needs the continued support of the international community as it strives to sustain peace and consolidate the political and economic gains made in recent years. Therefore, the sustained engagement of the United Nations country team remains very important. We are encouraged to note that the handing over of commitment from UNOCI to the country team took place in line with the plan established for the transition.

Let me conclude by paying tribute to the entire ONOCI team, including the military and civilian personnel, for their dedication and service.

**Mr. Skau** (Sweden) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Mr. President, and your team on assuming the presidency. We wish you great success in your work. I also wish to thank our friends from Uruguay for their exemplary work last month.

(*spoke in English*)

Let me begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Mindaoudou, for her comprehensive briefing this afternoon. As this is likely to be our last opportunity to take the floor on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), we would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the valuable efforts and important work of the mission over the past 13 years and to pay tribute to the women and men who have served in that mission over the years. I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her leadership and personal commitment during this important last and final phase.

Today is a day of transition for Côte d'Ivoire. We are gathered here this afternoon to discuss the closing of a peacekeeping mission, while only a few short hours ago Côte d'Ivoire was elected to serve on the Security Council. I congratulate Minister Marcel Amon-Tanoh and his team here in New York on their election this morning and we look forward to working with them next year in the Council.

We welcome the continued progress of peace and security in Côte d'Ivoire. The closing of UNOCI at the end of the month represents an important milestone and a new chapter in the history of the country. As the country begins to chart its way forward, I would like to make three points.

First of all, while we have many reasons to celebrate, this is not the end of the road for Côte d'Ivoire as it works to consolidate a stable and secure society for all Ivorians. It is important that we pay attention to the latest developments on the ground, in particular the second incidence of mutiny by soldiers, which occurred last month. Those developments are serious and demand a serious response. They underline the clear need for the Government to carry out meaningful reform of the security sector, including restructuring forces and enhancing cohesion, discipline and accountability. A reformed security sector will help build the population's confidence in the security institutions.

In addition, women's participation is of paramount importance to fostering sustainable and inclusive peace. The final report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/89) illustrates the potential for the increased participation of women in the political process, and we urge the United Nations country team to contribute to ensuring the participation of women and youth in the transition process.

Secondly, as UNOCI closes its mission, there is a need for continued international engagement.

It is important that Côte d'Ivoire's partners provide ongoing support to the Government's efforts to sustain peace and safeguard the investments already made in a sustainable future. The African Union and the Economic Community of West African States have played a key role in achieving a successful outcome to the Ivorian peace process. Going forward, regional actors will continue to have an essential role to play.

Thirdly, regarding the transition from UNOCI to the United Nations country team, we welcome the robust transition plan developed by the United Nations and agreed with the Government at the end of last year, but we note that the closing of UNOCI means that the United Nations presence in the country will face a financial cliff, which jeopardizes the sustainability of the gains achieved. We believe that the United Nations can do even better in ensuring that transitions in general are transformative and forward-looking processes. More systematic and integrated work across the United Nations system is needed sooner. We have a joint responsibility to ensure that United Nations country teams have that capability.

In conclusion, I would like to join the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in commending the Government and the people of Côte d'Ivoire for their resilience and their efforts to restore peace and stability to their country, with the support of the international community. The closure of the UNOCI mission underlines the remarkable journey the country has made since 2004. The international community must now continue to support the Government and the people of Côte d'Ivoire as they work to build a peaceful, equitable and prosperous country for all Ivorians.

**Mr. Yelchenko** (Ukraine): I too want to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Aïchatou Mindaoudou for her comprehensive briefing. Since this is the last briefing on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) in this Chamber, I would like to take this opportunity to convey our sincere appreciation to the mission's leadership and personnel for their contribution. Ukraine prides itself on playing an active role in UNOCI.

On 30 June, the UNOCI mandate will end on a high note, signifying the successful completion of the United Nations peacekeeping phase in Côte d'Ivoire. Many efforts and resources have been invested in the stabilization of the country. As we can see today, they have produced encouraging results. The prospects for Cote d'Ivoire appear promising. Significant progress has been achieved in restoring State authority throughout the country, rebuilding the security sector and promoting national cohesion and reconciliation.

Moreover, we see a country that has been entrusted by the entire United Nations membership to be in the Security Council not as a country under its agenda, but rather as an elected member. I therefore want to take this opportunity to congratulate Minister Amon-Tanoh on the successful outcome of Cote d'Ivoire's campaign in the Security Council. Next month, Côte d'Ivoire will also host a major international event — the summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation — which is another sign of the trust and respect of the international community.

Côte d'Ivoire is now at peace, but many chronic problems still have to be addressed. That requires a long-term action plan involving national actors, the United Nations, the African Union and other relevant stakeholders. The potential threats to national stability should be no longer perceived solely in terms of hard security, but rather in terms of socioeconomic impact. The recent mutinies in the country therefore require the country's leadership to redouble its efforts to turn peace into concrete dividends for all its citizens. Ukraine is committed to further supporting Cote d'Ivoire along that road — both in the Council and beyond.

**Mr. Gee** (United States): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her briefing. I also join others in welcoming the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire to the Security Council and congratulating him on his country's election, today, as a non-permanent member. We also congratulate the other new members elected today and look forward to working with all new members next year.

It is a momentous occasion when a peacekeeping mission can close after having successfully completed its work to stabilize and support a country emerging from conflict. We applaud the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, her staff and all the staff of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) who have contributed to the mission over its 13 years.

In just four weeks UNOCI will shut its door for good, bringing to an end a mission that provided critical support during the 2003 peace agreement and the 2010 political crisis. UNOCI supported efforts to protect civilians, promote good governance, human

rights, security sector reform and humanitarian assistance. Côte d'Ivoire is a success story and a model of how peacekeeping can benefit a country if its Government is committed to overcoming conflict and restoring peace.

We look forward to seeing the Government of Côte d'Ivoire maintain that positive momentum and cement the peace and security that has taken root with the support of the international community. Despite significant progress on key reforms, recent events have shown that challenges remain. The January and May mutinies in the armed forces over pay grievances resulted in the disruption of commerce, the closure of schools and increased civilian insecurity. The mutinies and accompanying protests also led to scores of injuries and several fatalities in confrontations with authorities. We urge the Government to work transparently, inclusively and without delay to accelerate and deepen efforts to reform the security sector, including by shaping a clear structure and purpose for the military based on the threats Côte d'Ivoire faces.

Finally, as we approach the end of UNOCI, we know that smart planning between a mission in transition, the Government, other international partners and a United Nations country team has been essential during the handover of mission tasks. In Côte d'Ivoire, a high level of cooperation in planning for the future led to the smooth transition happening today. We encourage the United Nations to institutionalize lessons learned and apply them to other missions in transition, such as those in Liberia and Haiti. We also encourage other countries hosting peacekeeping missions to recognize the importance of strong cooperation between the Government and the United Nations without impediments to movement and access in performing the missions' mandated tasks.

Once again, we congratulate all who worked together to bring peace and stability to Côte d'Ivoire over these past years.

**Mr. Umarov** (Kazakhstan): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and wish you a successful term.

Our delegation also welcomes His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire to the Chamber and congratulates his country on its election as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. We are looking forward to working with his delegation and wish his country every success.

My delegation would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mindaoudou for her final update on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). I join others in congratulating her for her outstanding and courageous leadership in fulfilling the mission's mandate.

We welcome the successful termination of UNOCI after 13 years of dedicated service for the cause of peace. The success of UNOCI in bringing stability to the country is the shared achievement of the Government and the people of Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations, the Security Council and the troop-contributing countries. The role of regional organizations — especially the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the International Organization of la Francophonie — has also been significant in fulfilling the mandate. Kazakhstan is proud to be part of that process as a country that sent military observers to Côte d'Ivoire.

We commend the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for the remarkable progress we are seeing in the country, which is a clear demonstration of its desire to fully own the future course of its progress. UNOCI has many lessons to teach future peacekeeping operations. We acknowledge Côte d'Ivoire's positive steps towards transferring its national institutional framework and response against transnational organized crime threats, including terrorism. The gains achieved must continue to overcome the remaining challenges by fostering national dialogue and political reconciliation. Focus should be given to social cohesion, weapons management, defence, capacity-building, security and law enforcement, fighting sexual violence and protecting children.

To reinforce all these measures means having implementation partners and meeting resource requirements for supporting the Government of Côte d'Ivoire in delivering on expectations. We therefore call for international assistance and necessary support for the Government and the United Nations country team. We look forward to a productive and fruitful cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

First of all, I would like to thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Marcel

Amon-Tanoh, for his presence. It is indeed a privilege for us to have him in the Security Council Chamber this afternoon.

I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire and Head of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), Ms. Aïchatou Mindaoudou, for the updated information she has just presented as well as for her excellent leadership. We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all her predecessors and the civilian and military personnel of UNOCI for their commitment to peace and stability in Côte d'Ivoire. We are grateful for and acknowledge their work done over the years as well as UNOCI's contribution in terms of lessons learned, which are an important contribution to United Nations peacekeeping missions.

We commend the countries, regional and multilateral organizations, including the African Union and the United Nations Office for West Africa, the United Nations agencies and country teams, and all those countries that contributed military and police contingents that assisted day after day in bringing peace to this kindred country. Without the cooperation and work of these organizations, the objectives of UNOCI would have been difficult to achieve. Proof of this is the certification of the 2010 election results by the African Union, at the request of Côte d'Ivoire, and the peace agreements signed through that organization.

Bolivia hails the people and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and encourages their efforts towards national dialogue, peacebuilding, political reconciliation, disarmament and the reintegration of ex-combatants into society. The international community must continue its work of cooperation, paving the way for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Côte d'Ivoire with full respect for its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

We commend the country for its economic growth, which has been remarkable. We acknowledge the efforts of the President, the Government and the people of Côte d'Ivoire in succesfully consolidating a stable political environment with three elections that have taken place peacefully and for the progress they have made in the process of reforming the security sector and in rebuilding the military.

We are encouraged to learn that the stakeholders believe that the peace process in Cote d'Ivoire is irreversible. We see success in the peace process as an opportunity for the Security Council to use the example and experience of our Ivorian brothers and sisters, whose witness and knowledge should enrich us, in order to do everything we can to promote a just, honourable and lasting peace for all.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Relations of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

**Mr. Amon-Tanoh** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, and the Ivorian Government, I wish every success to the Bolivian presidency of the Security Council and pay tribute to Uruguay for the effective way in which it steered the deliberations of this important body last month.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address the Council on this occasion of historic importance to my country and the Organization. Indeed, rare are the moments when the success of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, such as that which brings us together today around the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), has been celebrated in the Chamber.

This is an opportune time for me to pay tribute to Secretaries-General Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon, who through their actions made a major contribution to resolving the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. I would also like to pay tribute to the current Secretary-General and thank him for his support for my country in his previous functions and for the special attention that he has continued to pay to Côte d'Ivoire since his election. Our thanks also go to all the Member States that served on the Security Council during the crisis in my country and to all those that have made their troops available to UNOCI. In particular, I would like to pay tribute to those soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice for the return of peace to Côte d'Ivoire.

Today's celebration is of very special importance for us as it coincides with my country's election this morning as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2018-2019 term. This is a symbolic moment, and we place great hopes on the lessons and experience drawn by Côte d'Ivoire from the 13 years of UNOCI's presence in my country and which will,

in the course of our mandate in the Security Council, provide an example for other countries to follow.

The meetings I have had with all the States Members of the United Nations over the past few months, and especially the past three weeks, have enabled us to share their expectations. We are confirmed in our decision to work within the Security Council in order to come up with coherent collective responses to the global challenges of our time through dialogue and mutual respect. I thank everyone for the kind words expressed to my country and for the welcome that was extended to us on our candidacy and thus our election to the Council. Allow me, in turn, to express to the Council and all the other States Members of our Organization the gratitude of the President, the Government and the nation of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

Time will certainly allow us to further clarify the elements that have led to the success of UNOCI. For the time being, we can rightly stress that the success of UNOCI arises from the convergence of several factors, including the political will and high sense of responsibility of the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, which have put the State and its resources at the service of peace in its country. It is also due to the exceptional synergy between UNOCI and the Government and to the unity and resolve of the Security Council and the international community, which have facilitated the implementation of the Council's resolutions in all confidence. I would also cite the strong human relations between the President of the Republic and the various Secretaries-General of the United Nations, the good relations established between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Government, and the high quality of the Special Representatives appointed by the various Secretaries-General to Côte d'Ivoire. In that regard, I pay special and well-deserved tribute to Mrs Aïchatou Mindaoudou for her outstanding contribution to peace in my country and to the success of UNOCI.

UNOCI leaves behind a stable and peaceful country endowed with strong and modern institutions, and whose economic dynamism, despite the difficult context of the cocoa market, allows the Government to make significant progress every day in fighting poverty and creating opportunities for its young people. Nonetheless, we are aware of the challenges ahead in the process of establishing stability and peace in our country once and for all. These include completing the construction of a genuinely homogeneous and republican national army. This process has been somewhat unsettled of late by ill-tempered movements of veterans claiming their bonuses. After the final settlement of this issue by the Government and the adoption of strong measures for the benefit of the armed and security forces as a whole, ex-combatants no longer have any objective reason to disturb the tranquility of the Ivorians and the forward movement of the country.

While they do not call into question the quality of my country's emergence from crisis or its important achievements, these ill-tempered movements remind us, as I said in February last year in this Chamber (see S/PV.7880), of the need to accelerate the reform of the security sector and the professionalization of the national army in order to identify and give several thousand soldiers a republican identity and ethos. Our Government is working to that end through the full implementation of the Military Planning Law, whose adoption has been well received by professional soldiers.

The success of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and its closure will not slow down the pace of the Government's reforms. On the contrary, emphasis will be placed, inter alia, on consolidating the rule of law, strengthening the framework for combating impunity, and accelerating the appropriation of national reconciliation and social cohesion by the Ivorian people. Moreover, the President of the Republic is pursuing his policy of extending his hand and listening to the opposition, in the interests of the country.

As may well be imagined, the cooperation that binds my country to the United Nations will survive the closure of UNOCI and remain an important vehicle for the international community's support to the Ivorian people. To that end, we hope that more resources will be allocated to the country team so that it can fulfil its mandate in better conditions. At the same time, we call on our bilateral and multilateral partners to maintain their commitment to our country and to help us face the major challenges facing all nations today. Our friends must therefore remain more than ever mobilized alongside us in order to win together our tireless battles against poverty and youth unemployment, which are our Government's priorities.

The success of UNOCI is the happy end to a painful sequence in the history of my country. It must not make us forget that thousands of Ivorians

have lost their lives so that the values of peace, unity, conviviality and democracy might triumph in our country. These women and men, torn from the bosoms of their families, and who will miss out on the work of perfecting our nation, forbid us forever to allow new tragedies to visit our country.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Security Council of the determination of the Ivorian people to defend and preserve the peace so dearly won, with the support of the friends of Côte d'Ivoire.

*The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.*

United Nations S/PV.7958

# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

**7958**th meeting

Friday, 2 June 2017, 4.45 p.m.

New York

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| *President:* | Mr. Llorentty Soliz | (Bolivia (Plurinational State of)) |
| *Members:* | China | Mr. Liu Jieyi |
| | Egypt | Mr. Aboulatta |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | France | Mr. Delattre |
| | Italy | Mr. Cardi |
| | Japan | Mr. Bessho |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Umarov |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Safronkov |
| | Senegal | Mr. Ciss |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skoog |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Yelchenko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Wilson |
| | United States of America | Mrs. Haley |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Bermúdez |

## Agenda

Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea

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*The meeting was called to order at 4.45 p.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Republic of Korea to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/472, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

*A vote was taken by show of hands.*

*In favour*:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2356 (2017).

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the vote.

**Mrs. Haley** (United States of America): The Security Council is sending a clear message to North Korea today — stop firing ballistic missiles or face the consequences. The members of the Council — including three of North Korea's closest neighbours — agree that North Korea's missiles are a threat to international peace and security and that the international community must respond to the threat. It is long past time for North Korea to see the writing on the wall. The international community is coming together to take action, and the pressure will not cease until North Korea complies fully with the Council's resolutions.

North Korea's provocative and illegal missile launches are a direct threat to the security of numerous countries, including my own. Missiles have already fallen perilously close to South Korea, Japan and, most recently, Russia. Each North Korean rocket has the potential to hit an airplane or ship, which threatens civilian lives. Each test ratchets up tensions in the region.

But despite all the risks and the sanctions that the Council has imposed so far, North Korea still chooses to keep escalating. The reason that North Korea keeps launching these missiles is obvious. It openly says that it wants the ability to deliver its weapons of mass destruction over long distances to United States, South Korean, and Japanese cities. That is why the regime's ballistic missile tests are increasing. With each launch, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea gains valuable technical data to make even more progress, but, bit by bit, it wants to extend its reach. The Security Council has rightfully and repeatedly condemned the launches and required the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to suspend all activities related to its ballistic-missile programme. Foreign Ministers gathered here one month ago (see S/PV.7932) to demand that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea stop. Resolution 2356 (2017) shows that those were not just words.

The United States will work tirelessly to make sure that the international community never gets used to violations by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or looks the other way. And the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must understand that the international community will never accept the regime's development and testing of nuclear weapons. Until the Democratic People's Republic of Korea reconsiders, all States Members of the United Nations must do their part to increase pressure. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a global threat that requires a global response. There is still a lot of room to improve the implementation of the Security Council's sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That is why the United States renews its call on responsible States to sever diplomatic ties and cease illegal trade with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Countries must also do more to break up the smuggling rings of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and cut off the sources of funding that it uses to pay for the development of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them.

The United States will continue to seek a peaceful, diplomatic resolution to the situation. We want a negotiated solution, but the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must fulfil its basic obligations by first stopping all ballistic missile launches and nuclear weapons testing and taking concrete steps towards getting rid of its nuclear-weapons programme. Our goal is not regime change. The United States has no wish to threaten the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or destabilize the Asia-Pacific region. And we have never closed the door to dialogue with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. But as we have said before, all options for responding to future provocations must remain on the table. Beyond diplomatic and financial consequences, the United States remains prepared to counteract the aggression of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea through other means, if necessary.

The United States is fully committed to defending itself and its allies against aggression by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Once again, it is up to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to decide whether to stay on this dangerous path. As the Security Council showed today, future missile launches and nuclear tests are absolutely unacceptable. We hope that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea sees that response and chooses a more constructive path towards stability, security and peace.

**Mr. Liu Jieyi** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Relevant Security Council resolutions include explicit provisions against any launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea using ballistic missile technology. China is opposed to the launches conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Resolution 2356 (2017), adopted by the Council today, has demonstrated the united position of the international community against the development of nuclear and missile programmes by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. At the same time, the resolution reiterates the importance of maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and in North-East Asia at large, expresses a commitment to a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the situation and stresses the importance of reducing tension on the peninsula by the parties concerned.

China calls on all parties to fully and comprehensively implement Security Council resolutions related to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and strive for a peaceful settlement of the nuclear issue on the peninsula via redoubled efforts to promote non-proliferation, peace and dialogue. The current situation on the peninsula is complex and sensitive. At the same time, there is a critical window of opportunity for a return to the right track of seeking a settlement to the nuclear issue on the peninsula through dialogue and negotiation. It is incumbent upon all parties concerned to exercise restraint and do more to help ease the tension and build mutual trust, rather than to the contrary.

As a close neighbour of the Korean peninsula, China has always insisted on denuclearizing the peninsula, maintaining peace and stability on the peninsula and seeking a solution through dialogue and negotiations. China has always been firmly opposed to chaos and conflict on the peninsula. Based on developments on the peninsula, China has proposed the dual-track approach of promoting parallel progress in denuclearization efforts and the establishment of a peace mechanism on the peninsula. China has also put forward the suspension-for-suspension proposal, which would allow for the suspension of nuclear missile activities by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the suspension of massive military exercises by the United States and the Republic of Korea. Those proposals are pragmatic and feasible. We hope they will be seriously considered and will receive a constructive response by the parties concerned.

For its part, China is open to helpful proposals by all parties. We hope that all parties concerned will work with China to keep pushing for dialogue and negotiations in order to seek a solution to the problems on the Korean peninsula within the framework of the Six-Party Talks and continue to work actively and constructively towards to goal of early denuclearization and lasting peace and security on the Korean peninsula.

**Mr. Bessho** (Japan): Japan welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2356 (2017). We would like to express our appreciation to the United States for taking the lead. Our appreciation also goes to all the other members of the Security Council for their support.

For three consecutive weeks, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has launched ballistic missiles in blatant violation of relevant Security Council resolutions. That is totally unacceptable. Japan strongly condemns the most recent launch as well as previous launches, which were conducted eight times this year alone. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has obstinately continued its nuclear build-up,

while completely ignoring the will of the international community. Those continued provocations trample upon international efforts towards a peaceful resolution of nuclear and missile issues and constitute a direct challenge and threat to the security of Japan, the region and beyond.

The international community must not let the defiance of Security Council resolutions go unanswered. Today's unanimous adoption of resolution 2356 (2017) sends a very strong signal that ballistic-missile launches have consequences. On countless occasions, we have made it clear that we are always ready to resume dialogue if the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were to show sincere commitment and make concrete steps towards denuclearization. The current pattern of frequent and alarmingly provocative ballistic-missile launches indicate that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is nowhere near resuming a meaningful dialogue. That leaves us no choice but to continue to increase pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It is time for all States Members of the United Nations to demonstrate a renewed commitment to rigorously and thoroughly implementing the existing Security Council resolutions, including the one we just adopted today, so that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea understands that it must change its current policy.

In addition, resolution 2356 (2017) is not the end of our efforts. We must continue to exert pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea until it shows sincere commitment and concrete steps towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Japan will continue to work very closely with Council members and all other Member States to reach a comprehensive resolution to the problems related to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Cardi** (Italy): Italy welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2356 (2017). The Security Council has today sent another message of unity and determination against the repeated provocation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and a serious threat to regional and international peace and security. We thank the United States and China for moving the resolution forward in a constructive spirit of active collaboration with all the relevant parties and actors, which remains crucial to the overall efforts to bring peace and stability to the Korean peninsula.

Italy reaffirms its strong condemnation of North Korea's recent missile- and nuclear-related activities. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must end its blatant disregard for its international obligations and take immediate steps to abandom its defiant and self-isolating policies. It can do that by first committing to completely ceasing its missile and nuclear programmes in a verifiable and irreversible manner.

As Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), we continue to work tirelessly with other members in order to ensure the full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions, including the resolution that the Council has just adopted, by the entire membership. A rigorous and effective sanctions regime is essential in order to make the leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea calculate the price of its defiance of the Council and of the international community as a whole.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Italy believes that sanctions must remain a tool used to further a wider strategy aimed at achieving lasting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. Sanctions regimes are not an end in themselves. We must avoid negative consequences for the civilian population and a humanitarian situation in the country. The ultimate objective is to produce a change of behaviour by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which might frame a parth towards the achievement of a peaceful and comprehensive solution for the Korean peninsula and the region as a whole.

**Mr. Safronkov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia supported today's adoption of the new resolution 2356 (2017), concerning sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The resolution we have just adopted demands that Pyongyang stop its inappropriate behaviour and submit to the legitimate demands of the international community. Missile launches, especially those carried out without warning, are unacceptable. They are not only a threat to transport security in the region, but also to the lives of people.

At the same time, we would like to draw attention to some controversial points of the resolution that we have just adopted. Of course, Pyongyang is violating the sanctions imposed on it. However, it does not supply components of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) to non-State actors. There is no direct connection between the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) and the actions of the authorities in Pyongyang. The

practice of mentioning it in the context of sanctions must be stopped. It is counterproductive, especially for resolution 1540 (2004) itself.

Russia has repeatedly stated that resolution 1540 (2004) primarily serves as a platform for cooperation among States in order to prevent materials for weapons of mass destruction from falling into the hands of non-State actors. Without cooperation, it is impossible to achieve that goal at the global level. Attempts to drag the resolution into enforcement mechanisms will not work, especially in national jurisdictions. Supporters of maintaining the reference to resolution 1540 (2004) should understand that by doing so they undermine the inherent spirit of cooperation and interaction. In addition, countries that are already wary of this non-proliferation document are given an additional argument in favour of non-compliance.

We also have serious doubts about the mention in the text of some other WMD programmes. The presence of that passage requires convincing evidence. The Security Council has no right to make mistakes and must operate with real facts, not with assumptions. We remember how the United States initiated a war against Iraq under the false pretext of the presence of WMDs in Baghdad. At the moment, there is no evidence that Pyongyang is developing chemical- or biological-weapons programmes. If any colleagues have relevant, convincing evidence about Pyongyang's guilt on the matter, then we stand ready to look at it. The facts that we have at our disposal say the following.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a member of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and no claims against it have been made under the Convention. We also know that Pyongyang, while not a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, nevertheless actively encouraged Malaysia to involve the expertise of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the investigation of the murder of Kim Jong-nam, the final results of which have not yet been made public.

We would like to hear explanations from the United States regarding the broadening of American sanctions, announced on 1 June, against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It concerned three Russian companies and one Russian citizen. The step is perplexing and deeply disappointing.

We have repeatedly said that the mechanism of unilateral restriction is illegal from the point of view of international law. Practice shows the ineffectiveness of such measures and the destructiveness of the approach. The sledgeshammer of sanctions gets used as a universal method for solving world problems, instead of diplomatic tools. That fully applies to the recent decision of Washington, which does not contribute to the settlement of the situation around the Korean peninsula.

It is necessary to note that, after the change of Administration in the United States, sanctions by inertia remain a constant in American policy. That includes attempts to apply those sanctions to Russian organizations and citizens. Instead of starting to sort through the backlog that has accumulated in bilateral relations, Washington is doing the direct opposite, taking unfriendly steps that only complicate the normalization of our dialogue and cooperation in international affairs.

Pyongyang's reckless endeavours should not give rise to an increase in military activity in the region and, even more so, the implementation of plans to use force. Confrontational logic is fraught with catastrophic consequences for both the Korean peninsula and the region as a whole. To us, it is absolutely clear that the choice should be made in favour of maximizing the use of diplomatic tools.

In that context, Chinese proposals on the two-pronged freeze to North Korea's nuclear missile programmes and the United States-South Korean exercises, while advancing the solutions to the problems that the peninsula is facing, deserve serious attention. We are ready to promote international efforts and in particular those of the United Nations aimed at a diplomatic detente on the Korean peninsula. We welcome the Secretary-General's intention to raise the profile of the United Nations in resolving the tension around the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In order to find a formula for normalizing the situation, we ought not forget that sanctions against North Korea should not lead to a strangulation of its 25 million ordinary citizens, the vast majority of whom need urgent assistance. In that regard, we are convinced that, when it comes to humanitarian efforts, the United Nations must fulfill its duty. Dehumanizing the decisions and actions regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and other situations of crisis is unacceptable, regardless of how difficult those situations are.

The reason for the tension on the peninsula is not just Pyongyang's nuclear missile programme. It also has to do with increased military activity by some regional and especially extra-regional States in North-East Asia.

Another destabilizing factor is the recent deployment of components of the United States THAAD missile defence system on the territory of the Republic of Korea. We have repeatedly stated that such a move undermines the existing military balance in the region. It puts the security of neighbouring countries in a precarious position. Once again, we call on both the United States and the Republic of Korea to reconsider the expediency of such a step and think about its long-term consequences. We encourage others in the region to not be tempted to get involved in such destabilizing efforts.

It is now more important than ever to find a political solution. Some of our partners say that they are ready to renew contacts with Pyongyang, but under certain conditions. If we speak to one another in the language of ultimatums we will never move forward. The situation on the Korean peninsula and other acute contemporary crises require that we start working together as quickly as possible. Russia stands ready to start that kind of work.

**Mr. Wilson** (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2356 (2017) today. Through the resolution and our unity, we have sent a clear message to the regime of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea — faced with a sustained pattern of reckless, belligerent behaviour from Pyongyang, we, the Security Council, will act. Repeated missile launches threaten our allies and partners in the Republic of Korea, Japan and the wider region. With each and every launch and missile test, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea demonstrates a total disregard for international security. They put their destructive ambitions above the welfare of their own people. This pattern simply cannot continue.

Multiple missiles have been fired this year alone. The regime's actions and rhetoric shows clear intent to pursue its illegal weapons programme. We need to show that there are consequences and that the whole international community stands in support of the Council in tackling this threat.

So, for the third time in 18 months, the Council has had no choice but to take decisive action. Through this resolution under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, we will restrict the ability of key individuals and entities from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to assist or finance illegal weapons programmes — building on the analysis and recommendations from the United Nations Panel of Experts. We will blunt their ability to generate the revenue needed to prop up the regime's illegal nuclear- and ballistic-missile programmes.

Our signal is clear: we will not tolerate nor be distracted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's wide range of cover activities that prop up their illegal programmes. The resolutions adopted by the Council impose wide-ranging sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and they have bite. Through them, tangible pressure is being brought to bear on a regime that has acted with impunity for far too long. Let me be clear, it is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that has a clear choice to make on the way forward: either continue its destabilizing, dangerous actions or change its behaviour and begin to build a future for its people.

Together, we, the international community, must be steadfast when enforcing these new sanctions, as well as all previous measures adopted by the Council. All Member States must do their part to fully implement the sanctions. We have a collective commitment to address the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's behaviour. We must show our collective resolve to bring an end to those destabilizing, illegal actions.

**Mr. Yelchenko** (Ukraine): Ukraine voted in favour of resolution 2356 (2017), which designates additional North Korean individuals and entities for inclusion into the relevant control lists, in response to the recent provocative ballistic-missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We welcome the efforts of the delegations involved in drafting the text.

At the same time, in the context of its almost weekly missile launches and rapid progress in the North Korean missile programme, Pyongyang continues its aggressive rhetoric and steadily evolving tricks to evade existing prohibitions and restrictions. We must admit that the current sanctions regime needs to be strengthened. We are all aware that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to acquire technologies, materials, equipment and financial resources for the further development of its nuclear and missile programmes. Every single launch or test makes

it increasingly difficult for the Security Council and the international community at large to put an end to that sinister process.

We share the need to address the North Korean nuclear threat collectively and decisively. We must not allow Pyongyang to continue destabilizing the situation and discrediting the role of the Council in the light of global non-proliferation efforts. Only robust steps taken by the Council can stop the systematic and flagrant violations of international law and move us closer to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. We call upon the Council's members to stay united in further tackling the Democratic People's Republic of Korea issue to ensure the full compliance of Pyongyang with the Council's decisions and demands. Only a consolidated and firm stance will bear fruit and bring about positive change in the current tense situation in the region.

I had hoped to conclude my statement on that optimistic note. Unfortunately, the statement of the Russian delegation a few minutes ago added some doubts that now make it difficult to do so.

**Mr. Umarov** (Kazakhstan): We welcome the adoption of resolution 2356 (2017), on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The position of Kazakhstan remains stable and consistent. We condemn, in the strongest terms, any launches of ballistic missiles, as they are in flagrant violation of all the relevant Security Council resolutions. Such actions undermine our common international efforts to strengthen regional and, ultimately, international peace and security.

The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is a key element in preserving broader security across Asia. Possession of nuclear arms by the North Korean regime will create a precedent that will undoubtedly lead to an escalation of the regional arms race and may lead others to further proliferation so as to balance the nuclear threat of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from actions that have an impact on the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation process and pose a threat to both regional and global security. My country's non-nuclear status is the most convincing example that such an approach is the only promising one. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to opt for the same. We are convinced that there is no alternative to collective commitment to international obligations under Security Council resolutions.

We would recall that Kazakhstan's principled position is a firm condemnation of the use of weapons of mass destruction by any party and the promotion of conflict resolution through dialgogue. We call upon the interested parties and all Member States to take balanced and responsible actions that do not lead to irreversible consequences. We also call on all the parties concerned to refrain from any action that could increase the risk of a military escalation and further tensions in the region. My country strongly believes that, at this critical stage, the Security Council — the single body entrusted to maintain international peace and security — should stay united on this important issue.

**Mr. Delattre** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the United States for putting forward resolution 2356 (2017). France welcomes its unanimous adoption.

For years, North Korea has been insistently pushing the development of its nuclear and ballistic programmes at the highest levels of the regime. It has been methodically trying to acquire an operational nuclear arsenal at the sacrifice of its own population. Let us be clear: each ballistic launche brings the North Korean regime closer to developing precise and diversified operational military nuclear capabilities. That is progressing at an alarming and ever-increasing rate. At the same time, North Korea possesses other weapons of mass destruction — chemical and biological — a danger that must not be underestimated.

The current situation is greately fuelling tensions on the Korean peninsula. Every country could be within range of North Korean missiles one day. It is therefore a security threat for all countries. Moreover, it is the entire non-proliferation regime — which underpins our security framework — that is in danger.

Despite our repeated warnings, North Korea has flouted every one of the Council's resolutions and has defied the entire international community. Given the severity and urgency of the threat — one of the most acute threats to international peace and security — there was an urgent need for the Council to express its concern and reaffirm its authority.

France therefore welcomes the unanimous adoption of the resolution proposed by the United States, which makes it possible to reaffirm an unambiguous triple message of unity, firmness and commitment on the part of the Security Council. By this resolution, the Council condemns North Korea's unjustifiable actions and punishes individuals and entities that are central

to the operations of the regime and its programmes, in particular the ballistic-missile programme, and their financing.

The resolution is a determined response as well as a fresh warning. North Korea's dangerous and irresponsible headlong rush must come to a stop. North Korea must become aware that, if it insists on choosing escalation and provocation, then we will have no other choice but to increase pressure with total determination. France has said that sanctions are not an end unto themselves, but when we are faced with the irresponsible, unjustifiable obduracy of the North Korean regime, there is no other solution today than to stand firm and convince it to return to the negotiating table.

The present situation is the exact opposite of a context of dialogue. It is therefore up to North Korea to sincerely demonstrate through concrete and good faith gestures that it is ready to invest in a negotiated solution and contribute to the easing of tensions in the Korean peninsula. Our objective must remain the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

**Mr. Skoog** (Sweden): Like others, we welcome the unanimous adoption of today's Security Council resolution 2356 (2017). The Council's action comes in response to the intensified pattern of provocations by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and demonstrates, once again, the unity and resolve of the Council on this issue.

Sweden condemns in the strongest terms the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's repeated launches of ballistic missiles. Such actions are in blatant violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. We stand with the neighbouring countries and their peoples, who are living under the constant shadow of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's threatening behaviour.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to show blatant disregard for its international obligations. The implementation of all the relevant resolutions, including the one just adopted, is crucial. We call on all States Members of the United Nations to meet their obligations in that regard.

Finally, sanctions alone will not solve the situation on the Korean peninsula. Intensified and creative diplomatic efforts are needed to avoid misunderstandings and further escalation and to begin to prepare for a peaceful, diplomatic and comprehensive solution for the peninsula and the wider region. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to re-engage in a credible and meaningful dialogue with the international community.

**Mr. Bermúdez** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay wishes to take this opportunity to reiterate its concern about repeated missile launches by North Korea and the increased tensions on the Korean peninsula. Such actions constitute a serious threat to international peace and security and are a clear violation of Security Council resolutions.

Uruguay voted in favour of resolution 2356 (2017) because it believes that sanctions are a tool that the Security Council can use in order to perform its functions. However, sanctions are not an end unto themselves; rather, they are a tool for achieving a political goal, in this case the denuclearization of North Korea. In the same way, the commitment and firm determination of Member States to complying with their obligations and ensuring the correct and effective implementation of sanctions is needed, while avoiding adverse humanitarian consequences on the population of North Korea.

Uruguay stresses the need to work towards defusing tensions on the Korean peninsula and beyond. North Korea must respect all Security Council resolutions and desist from its nuclear ambitions. That would help to create a peaceful environment and a return to the path of dialogue, with the ultimate objective of achieving denuclearization.

From the Security Council, Uruguay will continue to fight along with the other 14 members to develop new lines of action and try new approaches to, or modalities of, negotiation in order to unlock this situation. Uruguay reaffirms its commitment to achieving a peaceful, political and diplomatic solution for denuclearizing the Korean peninsula — one that will sweep away the risk of a conflict of undesirable and unpredictable proportions.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express our full appreciation to the delegations of the United States and China for preparing and presenting resolution 2356 (2017), which was just adopted by the Security Council (resolution 2356 (2017)).

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2356 (2017) sends a clear message by all members of the Council and the international community that they oppose the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's recent violations of its commitments in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolutions 2321 (2016) and 2270 (2016). Egypt calls upon all parties to make further diplomatic efforts to create a political path towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and to safeguard the international non-proliferation regime. Egypt stands ready to support any international effort and any initiative to peacefully settle the chronic Korean crisis. We reaffirm the importance of avoiding the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

In conclusion, we reaffirm the pivotal role of the Security Council and the need to speak with one voice. The international community must continue its positive interaction and collaboration with the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) and its Panel of Experts in order to implement all the relevant Security Council resolutions.

**Mr. Ciss** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation voted in favour of resolution 2356 (2017), which strengthens the sanctions regime on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in accordance with my country's commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons, but also to express Senegal's position in favour of a denuclearized Korean peninsula. North Korea's launches of ballistic missiles, which my country has strongly condemned every time, attest to the country's determination to continue its nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes.

The previous sanctions have not stopped North Korea from gradually upgrading its nuclear capabilities and ballistic missiles. It continues to flagrantly violate the Council's resolutions and repeated requests to discharge its international obligations in this area in a clear, irreversible and verifiable manner. The actions of North Korea are therefore not only a threat to the people inhabiting the peninsula and the region, but they also seriously undermine the non-proliferation regime with the goal of developing nuclear-weapon delivery systems, which greatly exacerbates tensions in the region and beyond.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm Senegal's support for rigorous compliance with the relevant Council resolutions and to reiterate our hope for a swift resumption of dialogue in order to reach a comprehensive, peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the crisis.

**Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia): I would like to start by welcoming the unanimous adoption of resolution 2356 (2017), which once again sends a strong and unified message of the Security Council in response to the repeated ballistic missile tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The situation in the Korean peninsula has indeed been a source of great concern. The ballistic missile-related activities by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in violation of Security Council resolutions, seriously endanger regional and international peace and security. Today's resolution once again reaffirms the Council's unequivocal position calling on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and immediately to cease all related activities. In our view, this is in the interests of everyone — the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's neighbours, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea itself, the Korean Peninsula as a whole and the international community. There is a window of opportunity, as China has said. We want to see a peaceful resolution of this problem. Without a doubt, a further escalation of the situation on the Korean Peninsula will have devastating consequences for regional and international peace and security.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea should not be surprised to see people worried. It is therefore very critical that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea return to its international commitments on de-nuclearization and fully comply with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council in order to reduce the increased tension in the region. The full implementation of the Security Council resolutions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including the resolution that we just adopted today, has become all the more vital in the light of the prevailing situation. For our part, we remain committed to carrying out our obligations.

Finally, the need to find a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to this issue has never been more urgent. We support all efforts in the search for a

peaceful and comprehensive solution through dialouge, as reiterated by the resolution we adopted today.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Bolivia emphatically condemns the launching of ballistic missiles and the conducting of nuclear tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We call on the country to completely, verifiably and irreversibly abandon its nuclear programme.

We also believe that sanctions are a means and not an end in themselves. As was agreed at the most recent Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Group of 77, which brings together over two thirds of the Organization, we condemn unilateral sanctions as violations of international law.

We also encourage all parties involved in this situation to avoid an escalation of rhetoric and actions that would increase tensions and put international peace and security at risk, especially on the Korean peninsula.

We also underscore that we must reject a military way out of this situation and we must make the most of the resources provided to us by diplomacy, such a dialouge and negotiation. We welcome the dual proposal of a halt to the launching of missels and to nuclear tests along with a cessation of military exercises.

Lastly, we call for greater participation by Council members in responding to this and other issues of global concern when they are addressed.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Cho Tae-yul** (Republic of Korea): Let me begin by thanking the Bolivian presidency for convening today's meeting. My delegation is grateful to be a part of this important meeting.

The latest ballistic-missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, on 29 May, was the ninth in the year 2017 and the third in the month of May alone. In fact, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has conducted ballistic missile launches on an almost weekly basis since the inauguration of the new Government in Seoul, on 10 May. Such provocations by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in clear violation of multiple relevant Security Council resolutions, cannot be condoned and should be met with a resolute response. It is for that reason that the Republic of Korea supported the unanimous adoption of resolution 2356 (2017) in response to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's series of ballistic-missile launches and other prohibited activities since 9 September 2016.

The new sanctions resolution adopted today sends a clear message that the Council will not tolerate repeated ballistic-missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, regardless of their range, type or intended aim-point. With the adoption of this resolution, which has somewhat deviated from its usual response pattern on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea ballistic-missile launches, the Council demonstrated its united resolve to respond squarely in the face of the series of ballistic-missile provocations by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Resolution 2356 (2017) builds upon and expands the scope of the existing Democratic People's Republic of Korea sanctions regime. The individuals and entities that will be subject to the travel ban and the assets freeze under this resolution include the senior officals of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its core military apparatus, which are directly responsible for the regime's illicit nuclear- and ballistic-missile programmes. Some businesspersons and commercial entities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are also newly designated, which I believe will help further restrict the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ability to finance its illicit activities.

I take this opportunity to strongly urge Member States to fully implement all the relevant Security Council sanctions resolutions, including resolutions 2270 (2016), 2321 (2016) and 2356 (2017). After all, the ultimate goal of sanctions and pressure is to bring the Democratic People's Republic of Korea back to the negotiating table for denuclearization. In order to make the Democratic People's Republic of Korea choose the right path towards dialogue to that end, we, the international community, should speak with one voice and act in solidarity by thoroughly implementing all the sanctions resolutions. I sincerely hope that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will heed the concerted demands of the international community and seize the opportunity, without further delay, to chart a new beginning in inter-Korean relations, as well as in its

relations with the international community. Given the possibility of yet another provocation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we must continue to stand ready to respond to any further provocations in a more proactive manner.

In conclusion, I would like once again to urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cease all forms of provocation and immediately take steps for dialogue and take action towards denuclearization.

*The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.*

United Nations S/PV.7959

# Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

**7959**th meeting
Tuesday, 6 June 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

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|---|---|---|
| *President:* | Mr. Morales Ayma | (Bolivia (Plurinational State of)) |
| *Members:* | China | Mr. Liu Jieyi |
| | Egypt | Mr. Aboulatta |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | France | Mr. Delattre |
| | Italy | Ms. Velo |
| | Japan | Mr. Bessho |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Ashikbayev |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Iliichev |
| | Senegal | Mr. Guèye |
| | Sweden | Ms. Lövin |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Yelchenko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Rycroft |
| | United States of America | Mr. Klein |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Rosselli |

**Agenda**

Maintenance of international peace and security

Preventive diplomacy and transboundary waters

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Expression of condolences over the recent terrorist attacks**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to take this opportunity to express my most heartfelt condolences to the families, the Governments and the nations of all of the victims of the recent terrorist attacks.

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**Maintenance of international peace and security**

**Preventive diplomacy and transboundary waters**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, ministers and other representatives present at today's meeting. Their participation is an affirmation of the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

**The Secretary-General** (*spoke in Spanish*): Water, peace and security are inextricably linked. With demand for freshwater projected to grow by more than 40 per cent by the middle of the century, and with climate change having a growing impact, water scarcity is a growing concern.

By 2050, at least one in four people will live in a country where the lack of fresh water is chronic or recurrent. Strains on water access are already rising in all regions. Without effective management of our water resources, we risk intensified disputes between communities and sectors and even increased tensions among nations.

Three-quarters of United Nations Member States share lakes or river basins with their neighbours. Important river basins, such as the Nile, the Indus, the Ganges, the Euphrates-Tigris and the Mekong provide a lifeline for the economy, trade, culture and livelihoods of surrounding communities. All told, there are more than 270 internationally shared river basins that serve as the primary source of fresh water for approximately 40 per cent of the world's population. That is why it is essential that nations cooperate to ensure that water is shared equitably and used sustainably.

Indeed, water has proven to be a catalyst for cooperation among nations, even those that are not on good terms. In the second half of the twentieth century alone, 287 international water agreements were signed. For example, in South America, Lake Titicaca, the largest freshwater lake on the continent, has long been a source of cooperation between Bolivia and Peru. The 1960 Indus Water Treaty between the Government of India and the Government of Pakistan has survived three wars between those two countries. In my own experience, the Albufeira Convention, agreed during my time as Prime Minister of Portugal, continues to promote good relations on water management between Portugal and Spain.

(*spoke in English*)

I should like to make a brief comment on that agreement. During the time of my predecessor, the discussions between the Governments of Portugal and Spain were extremely difficult, and whenever there was the perception that an agreement might be possible there was an uproar in the press of both countries over the question of whether or not the Government were betraying the vital interests of their countries. When I became Prime Minister and José María Aznar became Prime Minister of Spain, we decided that our common interests were far more important than the difficulties in the elaboration of the treaty, and so, with two small teams on both sides, it was possible to quickly achieve something that we both considered to be a reasonable compromise — not a perfect solution for either country but a reasonable compromise.

Until the last moment, the uproar went on and the discussions in the media were furious about this issue, but the proof that political will is decisive is that the agreement was signed and, from that moment onwards, the discussion completely stopped. Things are working perfectly between the two countries, with enormous benefits, namely, in the common management of the rivers — allowing, for instance, floods to have a much less devastating impact than in the past. Something that had looked almost impossible became easy when there was the political will to do it, and once there was the political will to do it nobody paid a price. On the contrary, everybody benefited. I think that this is a lesson that can be used in many other parts of the world where people are afraid to go the extra mile to reach an agreement with a neighbour or with a partner.

Elsewhere in Europe, the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes has fostered collaboration and conflict resolution since 1992. As of March last year, the Convention became open to all United Nations Member States, offering the opportunity to create a global framework for preventive diplomacy for dealing with transboundary water issues.

The United Nations actively promotes mediation and dialogue as effective tools for preventing and resolving disputes over water and other natural resources. For example, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia is collaborating closely with the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea and other partners to build capacity in water diplomacy and to modernize the regional legal framework on the management of transboundary water resources. I look forward to visiting the Aral Sea in the coming days. While there, I will discuss with all five Governments of Central Asia how the United Nations is supporting mediation to prevent and resolve local and transboundary disputes over water in Central Asia and elsewhere. We stand ready to engage in preventative diplomacy and promote dialogue and mediation on natural resources and other issues wherever and whenever necessary.

Last year, the High-level Panel on Water, convened by former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the President of the World Bank, produced an action plan that champions a comprehensive, inclusive and collaborative way of developing and managing water resources, and improving water- and sanitation-related services.

The United Nations has also published a guide containing practical strategies and best practices in the area of water diplomacy As we work to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change, we will expand on these initiatives. I commend this Security Council meeting for highlighting how water is and should remain a reason for cooperation, not conflict. Let us commit to investing in water security to ensure durable peace and security for all communities and nations.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

I wish to thank the Secretary-General for participating in this meeting of the Security Council. The Council has the important responsibility to maintain peace and safety. Now more than ever, we should work to build bridges and not walls and to promote popular dialogue and diplomacy to solve all our conflicts for the benefit of life.

It is an honour for me to preside over this meeting. I should like to share some reflections on a theme that affects and commits to life, the welfare of all people and the balance and subsistence of our Mother Earth. I refer to water. This topic has an important impact on the maintenance of international peace and security. Our planet, the human family and life on Earth are experiencing a water crisis that will intensify in the coming decades. According to data provided by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the planet will have a global population of approximately 10 billion people by 2050, which will require a 50-per cent increase in the demand for food. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, by that same year the demand for water will have increased by 54 per cent. If consumer patterns hold, two-thirds of the world population will live with water shortages by 2025.

The situation is very serious. More than 800 million people lack access to drinking water, and more than 2.5 billion do not have access to basic sanitation. According to the United Nations, every day between 800 and 1,000 children under five die of diseases related to lack of access to drinking water and sanitation. It is also enlightening to know that since 1947, 37 conflicts have erupted between States because of water-related issues.

I wish to thank the United Nations and highlight the role it plays through its agencies in addressing this issue, which remains one of the most important challenges to humankind. In that regard, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has deepened our understanding of the need to achieve universal access to water and sanitation that is equitable for all humankind.

Additionally, States have the obligation to manage, responsibly and an integrated manner, water resources at all levels, including transboundary waters, under the principle of cooperation. In 2010, I proposed, on behalf of my country, that the General Assembly declare the access to water a human right so as to promote its enforcement and to gradually ensure its universal recognition and application. At its sixty-fourth session,

in July 2010, the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/292, which recognized drinking water and basic sanitation as a human right that is essential to the full enjoyment of life and of all other rights. In that regard, we continue to put forward our proposals so that all basic services are eventually declared human rights.

Unlike other resources for which alternatives can be found, such as oil, clean water does not have a substitute. There is no life without water. There are now 7 billion people using the same available sources of water — a limited, vulnerable and scarce resource that we must use judiciously. I come from a country with many indigenous peoples who live in rural areas. Our people have always considered water to be the source of life and a public good that belongs to everyone, not just to one set of people in particular. It a nutrient that Mother Earth produces and should be respected and conserved.

With regard to water, our peoples and communities were treated unfairly during the colonial era, as well as in the more recent republican era. We were not consulted about how the water was to be used, and that affected our rights to our land and other natural resources. The essential value of water as a social and cultural good and its link with our own identity was disregarded. During the neoliberal phase in my country — and I state this in all sincerity — the drinking water supply was privatized, as greater emphasis was placed on profits. The increasing needs of cities could not be met. Costs increased, which led to protests to have it returned to the control of the State. Against that backdrop, in their new Constitution of 2009, the people of Bolivia agreed that natural resources are strategic resources and belong to the public. They fall under the direct, indivisible and imprescriptible control of the people. We also stipulated that water is a fundamental right and vital to life; it is an indispensable resource that allows humankind to live in harmony with Mother Earth.

We are facing a complex water crisis that leads to the emergence of new challenges, which traditional water-management polices and modalities are ill-equipped to address — for example, the fact that water is considered to be a human right and not a private business or commodity. It defies logic that water is subjected to market conditions that focus on its use as opposed to it being freely accessible and universal; the urgent need to identify priorities for its use for vital purposes and to earmark increased available funds for water and basic sanitation infrastructure to shore up the global deficit of financing for water projects — which contrasts sharply with exorbitant military spending — its impact on human and economic development, its many uses, protection of the environment and respect for the cultural values of communities.

Similarly, we must point out that the vast majority of the world's most important reservoirs are currently being overused and are at risk of being polluted. A high percentage of fresh water sources are shared by two or more States, while agreements do not always exist as to their origin, ownership or use, thereby causing conflict that should, more or less, become opportunities for effective collaboration. According to the United Nations, there are 276 transboundary water basins in the world — 60 in Africa, 68 in Europe, 46 in North America and 38 in South America. Two hundred and fifty-six of those basins — 92.7 per cent of them — are shared by two, three or four countries. Twenty of those basins — 7.2 per cent — are shared by five or more countries. We are all closely linked by water. Traditional water-management policies are the result of the effects of climate change and have exposed a crisis that spark new local, regional and global tensions, which jeopardize the peace and security of nations. They are clearly important because the Security Council has already addressed the complexity of the topic on multiple occasions. Developments in international water law, which is a key component in the United Nations system, encourages new paradigms to be identified and adopted, with a view to promoting more effective water management. Water conflicts can then be resolved through renewed effective preventive diplomacy of transboundary waters. Since 1947, three hundred international conventions on water have been agreed.

As the Secretary-General mentioned, the United Nations was established to prevent wars. Increasing competition for resources in recent times means that the focus is on preventing conflicts and sustaining peace. The water crisis we face is one of the greatest threats posed to life on the planet. The organs of the United Nations, on the basis of their respective mandates, must redouble their efforts so that together we can stymie that threat. In that regard, I would like to share a few observations with the Council, which will, no doubt, be built upon today and in future debates.

First, water is vital to sustaining the life of all people and living beings and for maintaining balance

on Mother Earth. Water is shared but vulnerable universal heritage.

Second, fresh water is limited and cannot be replaced. As such, all of its sources must be conserved and safeguarded against pollution, the effects of climate change and overuse in activities that are not essential.

Third, the fresh water available is found in areas that are shared internationally. Its use must pave the way for opportunities that promote collaboration, interaction and harmony among peoples, not that spark conflicts surrounding its origin, ownership or use. Water jeopardizes peace and security among peoples; it must not be the cause of domestic or international conflicts.

Fourth, water must bring together all States, nations, communities, peoples, social movements and individuals so that together they can share their concerns and knowledge, reach consensus and develop more effective and collaborative water-management policies.

Fifth, water has inspired the development of new instruments of international law that incorporate principles surrounding its use, conservation, cooperation efforts, the sharing of information and technology and focus on its use for vital purposes, which all deserve States' full attention.

Sixth, water should inspire a new global awareness, with a view to protecting and conserving the resource for future generations, while ensuring its universal access and seeking to avoid conflicts.

Seventh, States should consider entering into governance agreements that emphasize the sustainability of transboundary water resources and provide for the establishment of institutional mechanisms that ensure the reasonable use of such resources.

Eighth, States have a duty to actively and permanently cooperate with each other. They should provide timely information on any significant changes emanating from the use of transboundary water resources.

Ninth, States should refrain from adopting unilateral measures that endanger or affect the rights of other States with which they share transboundary water resources.

Finally, as the Charter of the United Nations establishes, States have an obligation to seek solutions to their disputes through negotiation, investigation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, recourse to regional agreements and organizations and other peaceful means, such as good offices. Where water flows, peace must also flow.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for International Development Cooperation and Climate.

**Ms. Lövin** (Sweden): Let me first express my condolences and those of the Swedish Government and people on the loss of life following the vicious and cowardly attacks in Kabul and London. Our thoughts are first and foremost with the families of those who lost loved ones and those who are now recovering from their injuries. We share the shock and outrage of the British and Afghan peoples and I assure them that Sweden stands with them at this time.

Moving on to the subject of today's discussion, I would like to thank Bolivia for putting the issue of preventive diplomacy and transboundary waters on the agenda. Water is one of the essential building blocks of human life. Without it, nothing can survive. I also thank the Secretary-General for his insightful and thought-provoking statement. He underlined for us the challenges and opportunities presented by transboundary waters. He also underscored the vital importance of preventive diplomacy as a tool for averting conflict and fostering cooperation through water management.

Today's meeting coincides with another important meeting focused on water, specifically on our seas and oceans. Sweden is proud to co-host the Oceans Conference with Fiji, which started yesterday. We believe that the Conference can be a game changer and lead to a reversal in the decline of the oceans to the benefit of people, the planet and prosperity.

The topic at hand is vital and urgent. The effects of climate change are real. They are being felt every day, not least by those who depend on rivers, lakes, seas and oceans to sustain their lives and livelihoods. Sweden is not excluded from such concerns. We are currently facing unprecedented low groundwater levels in parts of our country, which is affecting countrywide water supply levels almost throughout the entire contry. It is imperative that we all respond to the challenge by raising the level of our global ambition to meet our global responsibility.

Sweden is deeply and fully committed to the prevention agenda being pursued by the Secretary-General, which the Council discussed it in January (see S/PV.7857). Such commitment to a more holistic approach to prevention builds on an acknowledgment of the many varied and interlinked drivers of conflict. The issue of the management of transboundary waters is an important example. A large proportion of the world's population depends upon shared water resources for domestic, agricultural and industrial uses. How shared water is managed between communities has a profound effect on all aspects of human life, as well as economic growth and sustainable development. Considering its importance, it is not surprising that shared waters can also be a source of tension that fuels conflict and threatens peace. The negative effects of climate change have the potential to increase such tensions. To quote the Secretary-General,

> "climate change is a threat in itself and a multiplier of many other threats — from poverty to displacement to conflict".

In response, we need to support countries' efforts to make informed and efficient decisions when responding to the effects of climate change, including on transboundary waters. The United Nations needs an institutional home for the security risks related to climate change that are already affecting countries. Such a home would ensure that the United Nations has the skills set needed to provide adequate risk assessments and deliver comprehensive risk-management strategies with regard to the impact of climate change. Together with increased capacity for more integrated, cross-pillar analysis, such work would also provide the early warning needed to support the Council's work to prevent conflicts from emerging. That need was underlined in March with the adoption of resolution 2349 (2017).

Improving the management of water resources so as to ensure water security must be a top priority at global, regional and national levels. We simply cannot afford not to responsibly and sustainably manage our waters. Issues of shared waters can and must be turned into opportunities for cooperation. Doing so can help prevent conflicts and deliver positive outcomes for all communities across borders. We have a number of tools at hand to support such efforts.

First, international law relating to water, which sets out key principles around prevention and avoiding transboundary harm, can play a significant role in preventing conflict. The Aarhus Convention is an important instrument for ensuring the participation of the public and non-governmental organizations in environmental decision-making. In that regard, it is important that the rights of indigenous peoples be recognized, taken into account and included in decisions regarding water resources.

Secondly, regional actors have a crucial role to play. As the Secretary-General underlined, Europe has a long history of managing shared waters. We have developed extensive systems for transboundary water governance, including an overreaching treaty framework. The European Union has lessons to share in that regard. So, too, has Sweden, where we have made efforts to gain experience in the area of water diplomacy for the benefit of all countries. The Stockholm International Water Institute and the UNESCO International Centre for Water Cooperation and Global Water Partnership, which is hosted by Sweden, hold extensive knowledge pertaining to transboundary water and actively engage in water management dialogues.

Finally, we should enhance and deepen our efforts to work together around transboundary waters. Cooperation needs to be extended beyond managing a shared resource to the areas of increasing the quality of water and protecting the environment. Cooperation over shared waters can have far-reaching positive impact and build trust far beyond the issue of managing a shared resource, which further reduces the risk of conflict.

The waters that we share — whether rivers, lakes, seas or oceans — sustain life and support our common prosperity. However, they are coming under threat more and more. No country acting alone can respond. Instead, we must work together as partners across borders in order to secure our shared future and protect our planet for everyone.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister of Fisheries and Maritime Economy of Senegal.

**Mr. Guéye** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset, Sir, to say what an honour and a pleasure it is for the Senegalese delegation to see you personally presiding over this meeting of the Security Council, which you decided to devote to the important issue of transboundary waters and preventive diplomacy. That decision has made it possible for the Council to consider, for the third time in 14 months, the issue of water and its relationship with peace, in the wake of the

Arria Formula meeting held on 22 April 2016, under the effective presidency of Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, and the open debate held on 22 November 2016 (see S/PV.7818), presided over by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Senegal abroad, Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye.

The fact that this body has met three times, with growing interest on the part of Member States and in such a short time, on this issue is an affirmation, if such were needed, that this is a relevant topic. We would highlight also the well-considered decision made by our respective countries, Senegal last year and Bolivia today, to consider this issue from the perspective of prevention, which the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres — whom I thank for his important statement — decided to place on the list of absolute priorities within the framework of the maintenance of international peace and security.

It can never be said often enough: the continued scarcity of water resources, together with their unequal distribution throughout the world, leaves us no room for inaction. In fact, given rapid demographic growth, runaway urbanization, the worrying issue of global warming and the increasing need to invest in hydraulics, the question of access to water is today more burning than ever in a world where 60 per cent of water resources are located in nine countries.

This frightening state of affairs requires a paradigm shift on the issue of water in order to set in motion a preventive approach that is based on two major pillars: cooperation, in order to ensure access to water resources and mediation, in order to resolve differences among States.

We believe, therefore, that the goal is no longer simply to make clear how water is related to peace and security, or the fact that we need to prevent water-related conflicts, but, rather, how to share experiences of successful cooperation. That is why it is my pleasure to talk to the Council about the Senegal River Basin Development Organization (OMVS), which represents a success story in the area of the joint management of transboundary waters. Given the serious consequences of the severe droughts of the 1970s, three countries — Senegal, Mali and Mauritania — guided by the ideals of solidarity, sharing, fairness and peace, decided in March 1972 to adopt a forward-looking vision that resulted in the creation of the OMVS, successor to the Senegal River Riparian States Organization.

Those three founding countries, joined in 2006 by the Republic of Guinea, defined what has become known as the Water Charter, which is based on the idea that since water is a rare commodity and therefore potentially an object of conflict, it must be shared on the basis of its uses, not among member States, so as to ensure joint management of the basin in a spirit of solidarity.

This resource-sharing among uses is based on the following principles: the obligation to ensure a balanced management of water resources; the fair and reasonable use of river water; the obligation to preserve the environment; the obligation to negotiate in case of conflict; and the obligation for each riparian State to inform other riparian States before undertaking any action or project that could have an impact on the availability of water, or about the possibility of implementing a future project.

This vision was very forward-looking because the Charter, well before its time, established the principle of "polluter pays" and grants representatives of users, territorial communes, non-governmental organizations and decentralized management committees observer status within the Standing Commission on Water. In doing so, OMVS member States ensured access to water for riparian communities and enabled them to invest in energy, agriculture and transport while promoting good-neighbourly relations in the region.

It is in that same spirit that Senegal will be undertaking its presidency of OMVS after the election on 17 May of President Macky Sall to preside over the Conference of Heads of State and Government for the upcoming two years.

President Sall intends to modernize the organization at an accelerated rate and implement new projects in the area of energy and the navigability of the river, and to promote inclusive cooperation in a spirit of solidarity so as to ensure that the Senegal river unites and does not divide riparian countries.

Historically, as we know, rivers have been the cradle of great civilizations, and we should never lose sight of this historic role if we wish water and transboundary waters in particular to continue playing a uniting role. But knowing the geostrategic challenges surrounding this resource, we cannot exclude the threat of future conflicts concerning water. In this light, the Council has no other option but to turn to prevention.

It is therefore important to promote cooperation in the management of transboundary water resources, which would make it possible to guarantee peace and provide for the interests of all. But for this, the international community must muster the political will to strengthen its mediation capacity, in particular by helping the existing cooperation framework or, where there is a need for it, in helping to establish new ones.

It is all the more necessary to recall, as underscored by Mr. Danilo Türk, President of the Global High-level Panel on Water and Peace, in the Council last November, in saying that of the 263 international watercourses, only 84 have joint management institutions, and many are inefficient.

It is our common responsibility, therefore, to promote a mediation that is complementary to cooperation, particularly within the framework of the United Nations, three quarters of whose Members share watercourses with their neighbours.

We wish also to welcome the outstanding work done by the Secretariat, in particular the Department of Political Affairs, and to thank them for their valuable support for their mediation efforts throughout the world. Given all of these efforts, we wish to seize this opportunity to invite the Security Council, the guarantor of international security, to take a careful look at the issue of transboundary waters in order to strengthen its conflict-prevention efforts. Make no mistake, the future of preventive diplomacy lies in cooperation. Given the multiplicity and interrelatedness of existing security challenges, our motto should remain that of preventive multilateralism.

That message is exactly what the Senegalese initiative on water, peace and security is trying to promote. It seeks to show that, with the support of the international community, countries can be helped to replace competition for access to water — a source of conflict — with cooperation around this strategic resource, and, in that way, prevent conflicts and strengthen relations between States.

Finally, it remains for me to reiterate the unwavering commitment of Senegal to continue its efforts to prevent water-related conflict, and for the the idea of creating a Group of Friends on Water, Peace and Security has emerged and will no doubt soon become a reality.

**Mr. Ashikbayev** (Kazakhstan): First and foremost, on behalf of the people and the Government of Kazakhstan, I would like to offer our sincerest condolences to Afghanistan and the United Kingdom for the deadly attacks that occurred recently. We would also like to extend our sympathies to the families of the victims and wish the injured a speedy recovery.

My delegation warmly welcomes the distinguished presence in New York of His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and thanks him for his insightful remarks on the relationship between preventive diplomacy and transboundary waters. We also thank the Bolivian presidency for its foresight and proactive action in drawing attention to this important topic, which is in line with the Secretary-General's priorities on preventive diplomacy. My delegation would like to make the following observations and recommendations.

First, threats of transboundary water disputes are very important, as shared water resources flow through different countries. My country defined water security as one of its priorities during its campaign for the non-permanent seat it occupies on the Security Council. Like armed conflicts, water-related conflicts need early action and negotiations. In that regard, I refer to President Nursultan A. Nazarbayev's policy address entitled "Kazakhstan's Concept Vision on Sustaining Global Partnership for a Secure, Just and Prosperous World". The address sets forth numerous principles applicable to averting water-related conflicts. History has proved that there is a causal relationship between water resources and conflict. Water diplomacy and development can therefore save millions of lives. Water is a critical part of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, which drives all the other SDGs, which are so necessary for peace and prosperity.

Second, water is vital for peace and progress in the Central Asian region. In that regard, we welcome the attention the Secretary-General is paying to the problems of the Aral Sea and water-management issues in general in Central Asia. I would like to remind the Council that the area of the drain bottom of the Aral Sea is around 6 million hectares. Annually, about 100 million tons of salt rise and are carried hundreds or a thousand kilometres away. In that regard, we stand ready to follow up on the outcome of the Secretary-General's visit to the site of one of the largest environmental disasters in the history of humankind, which now directly affects the lives of over 30 million people today and is a threat to the entire world.

As the largest landlocked country in the world, Kazakhstan has never taken water security for granted, and water resources management is high on our agenda. We could experience serious water scarcity in the medium to long term, with significant impacts on our socioeconomic development, with a projected 50 per cent shortage by 2040. With our Central Asian neighbours, we are working on water-related regional arrangements and transboundary water-resources management. We believe that immediate action has to be taken to ensure that freshwater resources are not negatively impacted by climate change, urbanization, population growth and pollution.

We greatly appreciate the efforts of international partners, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Bank, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Islamic Development Bank and individual countries, aimed at assisting Central Asian nations to find common ground on water security in the region. We also commend the efforts of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia in that regard.

Kazakhstan has initiated the creation of a Central Asian investment fund for water projects to co-finance the construction and renovation of water facilities. We have also proposed establishing a regional centre for water security and jointly developing and signing a pact on water and environmental security in Central Asia.

Third, water disputes need early resolution because water flows across legal and political boundaries, thereby increasing the number and categories of potential stakeholders. Boundary-crossing also means that various actors can take recourse in more drastic alternatives with quick results, such as cutting off water supplies, rather than undertaking negotiations. Our third recommendation is therefore to harmonize the interests of upstream and downstream stakeholders, which may vary sharply.

Likewise, and fourth, approaches on water use and effective management must be balanced. Water-resource management should be an issue for discussion and peaceful resolution and not devolve into hostilities. We also require greater emphasis on water data and policy innovations with regard to access to clean water and sanitation.

Fifth, water negotiations must focus on substance and result in mutually beneficial agreements at lower cost and with timely implementation. They must be fair, free, open and inclusive. They must engage women, youth and vulnerable groups. They should be conducted with mutual recognition and respect, leading to joint problem-solving successes.

Sixth, cooperation in transboundary waters should be used as effective confidence-building measures at all levels, from small-scale community and local Government projects to complex regional and international collaborations carried out by Governments, the private sector and civil society at each level.

Seventh, neighbouring countries, regional and subregional organizations and development banks can assist in water disputes as they do in armed conflicts. All national and international legal frameworks and mutually agreed arrangements on international waters, be they bilateral, regional or multilateral, must be respected and implemented by all Member States.

Eighth, the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism on All Freshwater Related Issues, Including Sanitation needs to strengthen its capacities to render more effective guidance to Member States, which in turn must implement the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Water. We believe that the global water road map and the SDG 6 Fund need to be strengthened. Member States should be empowered to assist least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

Finally, Kazakhstan will work towards a water-secure world, on water-disaster risk reduction and resilience and supports national action and regional and global cooperation for changing the way the world looks at water and how we manage it.

**Ms. Velo** (Italy) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the presidency of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for having convened today's briefing, which will contribute in increasing the attention paid to the links between natural resources, climate and security.

(*spoke in English*)

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

As highlighted on the occasion of the first debate in the Security Council on water, peace and security

last November (see S/PV.7818), water scarcity, together with other megatrends, such as population growth, rapid and chaotic urbanization and food insecurity, can be an instability multiplier and a driver of migration and conflict. The Secretary-General has reminded us of this fact today, as he did last week in his speech on climate action at the Stern School.

I would like to highlight that, in tackling climate change and implementing the 2030 Agenda in a timely manner, the Paris Agreement remains a cornerstone in cooperation among countries. At the same time, transboundary water cooperation is a powerful tool for the long-term prevention of conflicts. We consider today's briefing especially timely because it is taking place in the light of the renewed focus by the Secretary-General on preventive diplomacy, which Italy fully supports, and of the crucial impact of water issues on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustaining Peace Agenda where the nexus between peace, security, development and human rights is clearly established. In that respect, I would like to develop three main points.

First, a global multilateral framework for promoting water cooperation and ensuring the protection and preservation of international watercourses is fundamental, and we have the tools to achieve it. The 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses enshrines prevention at its very core. Also, allow me to recall that the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes — the first water convention finalized by United Nations Economic Commission for Europe — was opened last year to all States Members of the United Nations, thereby becoming another effective tool for transboundary water cooperation worldwide. As a party to both of those instruments, Italy strongly encourages their ratification and full implementation by Member States, as they represent a fundamental platform for the further development of regional frameworks and conventions on water cooperation. The International Fresh Water Treaties Database lists over 400 water agreements: they are the most effective benefits-shared alternative to confrontation.

Secondly, Europe has long-standing experience in this field. The Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River are two of the first examples of water-related multilateral frameworks in history. Building on that experience, the European Union has always been committed to promoting water cooperation in other regions of the world.

Thirdly, I would like to underscore my country's engagement in addressing water challenges at both the multilateral and bilateral levels. As a member and host country of the Food and Agriculture Organization, Italy has actively participated in the establishment of the Global Framework on Water Scarcity, whose goal is to mobilize under a single integrated framework all actors dealing with water scarcity in its social, environmental and economic dimensions, with a focus on agriculture and taking into special account the effects of climate change. Furthermore, within the Global Framework, last April we adopted the Rome Statement on Water Scarcity in Agriculture, which, inter alia, underscores the importance of water governance and promoting integrated approaches to watersheds.

At the national level, Italy recently implemented a new strategy for basin management with the aim of promoting an integrated approach to water management and soil conservation. Through shared governance, public and private stakeholders join efforts in improving the maintenance of our river basins, fostering local development to create economic opportunity and mitigating hydrological risks. Such a cooperative approach, in a shared legal framework, is key to preventing water-related disputes. Moreover, Italy increased its development aid in 201. We will double that increase in 2017, and triple it in 2018. We want to ensure that those resources are directed towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and that they have an impact on capacity-building, including in the sustainable use of natural resources.

In conclusion, resolution 2349 (2017), on the Lake Chad basin region, recognized the adverse effects of climate change and ecological changes among other factors on the stability of the region, including through water scarcity, and emphasized the need for adequate risk assessment and risk-management strategies by Governments and the United Nations relating to those factors. We supported and co-sponsored the resolution because we believe in international cooperation, institution-building and partnerships. Benchmarks in that regard will allow us to achieve not only international water-related development goals, such as those set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but also to tackle the root causes of conflict and avoid international confrontation.

Italy remains steadfast in these efforts for prevention and peacebuilding. Water, which has nurtured life and the human family, fostered civilizations and inspired many a creative mind, can also motivate our actions and be an instrument of peace.

**Mr. Bessho** (Japan): I would like to extend my warmest welcome to His Excellency President Morales Ayma and to thank him for convening this meeting on the important subject of preventive diplomacy and transboundary waters and for presiding over it himself personally. This is an excellent opportunity to build on the open debate, held under the Senegalese presidency, on water, peace and security last year (see S/PV.7818). I would also like to thank Secretary-General Guterres for his insightful remarks.

Sound and peaceful water resource development and management are crucial to achieving peace and prosperity. That was true in Japan throughout its history of nation-building and economic development. The same must have been the case in most countries. When several countries share rivers, lakes or aquifers, water management becomes a bigger challenge. Often, vying for scarce water resources has led to conflicts or perpetuated existing ones among different States, ethnic groups or communities. External factors such as climate change, population increases and environmental pollution may put further pressure on water resources, thereby exacerbating tension. However, in many instances, sharing water resources, with due respect for the needs of others, has brought adversaries together to achieve peace and prosperity. That is where we see opportunity for cooperation and preventive diplomacy. Cooperation among stakeholders in the area of water resources management can constitute a part of confidence-building measures and can prevent conflicts.

The international community can contribute to confidence-building by facilitating dialogue on transboundary water issues and by providing assistance to water-management projects. Japan has long supported countries in improving access to water, developing water management and governance capabilities and in dealing with water-related challenges to promote stability and de-escalate underlying tensions. Japan has been a proud partner of the Central Asian nations in promoting regional cooperation.

Water is one of the many areas of our cooperation. When Prime Minister Abe visited the region in 2015, he agreed with every leader of the five Central Asian States bilaterally that the issue of the efficient use of natural resources was essential for sustainable development. Prime Minister Abe expressed the intention of Japan to cooperate with regional countries for effective management and sustainable use of water resources in the region. For example, in Tajikistan, an upstream country, which depends heavily on water-sourced power generation, Japan has promoted a project to improve the efficiency of hydroelectricity utilization. In central Uzbekistan, a downstream country, Japan provides assistance for improving irrigation systems so that water can be supplied in a more stable manner for agriculture, while at the same time cutting electricity consumption used for pumps. Japan believes that improving water management in both upstream and downstream countries benefits both groups of countries, thereby contributing not only to sustainable water use in the region but also to regional confidence-building.

Turning to Africa, in the Sudan, Japan provides assistance to improving the water supply in the eastern region and to developing policy recommendations on integrated water resource management so that water-related challenges can be dealt with in a more systematic manner, based on data.

Japan also takes a multisectoral approach based on water provision and capacity-building in agriculture, health and rural governance. Considering that water has been one of the sources of conflict in Darfur and other regions, we believe that assistance in the areas of water resource development and management increases confidence in post-conflict reconstruction efforts and leads to stability within a society.

Conflict can be prevented by developing areas of practical cooperation and building confidence. I have touched upon just a few examples of such cooperation by my country. When transboundary water management becomes a diplomatic issue between nations, it goes without saying that seeking peaceful solutions is important. Interested countries may learn from the success stories of others that are being shared today. Japan will continue to support countries in improving water management and access as building block for sustainable peace and security.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me thank you, Mr. President, and your country for the initiative of convening this important

meeting. Egypt believes that competition over limited resources, in particular shared water resources, may increase the chances of conflict, especially given the negative impact of climate change. That is already evident in a number of conflicts on our agenda in the Security Council.

Egypt has raised its water scarcity problem at many international and regional forums. Egypt has a single source of fresh water, namely, the Nile River. Egypt derives 97 per cent of its water resources from the Nile River and is entirely dependent upon it. Egypt is part of the dry belt area of North Africa, where it rarely rains. Egypt is also water deficient; it uses 102 billion cubic metres per annum, whereas its total available water supply from conventional resources is 58.8 billion cubic metres per annum. That includes Egypt's share from the Nile River, as well as water from rain, floods and aquifers. Egypt is below the water poverty line, as the per capita share decreased to 625 cubic metres per annum and is likely to decrease further to 470 cubic metres per annum when the population reaches 120 million by 2025.

Egypt believes that water should be a tool for cooperation, development and water security. Hence, together with its brotherly countries in the Nile River basin, in 1999 we launched the Nile Basin Initiative, which seeks to enhance cooperation among all the countries of the basin to achieve common goals and interests. The Initiative has been highly successful. We are now seeking to consolidate our gains and restore its inclusive nature, following Egypt's suspension of its participation in the Initiative's activities.

It is worth noting that Egypt believes that the establishment of a Nile basin commission should be based on sound principles that respect the interests of all countries and are in conformity with the established rules of international law. Such a commission should include all Nile basin States, without exception, in order to achieve the desired goals. However, we have a number of concerns regarding the incomplete framework agreement, including the fact that the agreement recognizes the violation of the principle of consensus that led Egypt to suspend its participation in the technical activities of the Initiative since 2010.

Egypt still believes in the importance of serious and constructive dialogue to restore the inclusive nature of the Initiative and to settle the outstanding disputes. Egypt welcomed President Museveni's kind invitation to hold the Nile Basin States Summit on 17 June in an endeavour to break the current impasse on this vital issue.

Egypt believes that cooperation is the optimal way to determine the best use of the Nile River. Such cooperation can take the form of bilateral projects with Nile River countries in order to make use of the water without compromising the interests of other countries. The Declaration of Principles on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam was concluded among Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan on that basis. We would like to stress the importance of all parties' full compliance with and implementation of the provisions of that declaration. Egypt believes in the vital role of preventive diplomacy in preventing future conflicts on shared water resources through the following tools.

First, we must follow the two principles of "no harm" and "prior notification" among co-riparian countries. In that regard, when countries upstream develop projects on a shared water course without rigorous studies showing the potential harm to countries downstream and means of adaptation, by so doing they are flagrantly violating those two principles.

Second, States must honour their obligations under international law, including bilateral and multilateral agreements on transboundary water resources. They must refrain from unilaterally developing projects on a shared water course without consulting with other riparian States. It is worth noting that undertaking consultations in accordance with legal rules and in good faith will be for the good of all and will ensure the sustainable use of the shared water course.

Third, everyone should know that any unilateral measures on shared water resources will not produce the desired outcomes of a given project, but rather harm the interests of other riparian countries in various ways, such as a decline in the arable land area, a reduction in energy production, increased environmental degradation and poor water quality, rendering it unfit for human use. We should be cautious and seek to prevent this from happening in order to avoid internationalizing these issues, which will be inevitable in the case of a conflict that threatens international peace and security.

Fourth, we should avoid interpreting the principle of the fair and equitable use of shared water resources in a way that harms other riparian countries. How can a certain usage be described as fair and equitable if it

harms the interests of other countries, in particular those downstream, and threatens their stability and security?

Fifth, other non-State international actors, in particular international donors, banks and construction companies, should respect international standards regarding water facilities on transboundary watercourses. Such facilities should not be funded or erected without the prior approval of all riparian countries, in particular those downstream, in order to avoid disputes and prevent future conflict among riparian countries.

Sixth, information should be exchanged on successful international expertise in the field of shared water resource management. A comprehensive confidence-building approach should be adopted in good faith, avoiding any unilateral measure that would harm not only downstream countries, but the hydrological cycle of the shared watercourses.

Seventh, the United Nations should play a clearer role in developing cooperation mechanisms among riparian countries along international rivers, building capacity to optimize the use of water and working to prevent water-related conflicts. This includes raising awareness about international law principles governing the use of international rivers and enhancing compliance with these principles.

Water can contribute to or threaten international peace and security, and therefore requires further attention so that related problems can be addressed in a timely manner. Egypt is therefore of the view that it is high time for the Security Council to take action and produce an outcome that reflects all of the important points to which I have alluded in my statement today. We call on the Security Council to begin consultations on producing an outcome of this important meeting that would form the basis for future Security Council resolutions or debates on preventing conflicts that might arise in relation to shared water resources.

**Mr. Ilichev** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are pleased to see you, Sir, in the chair of the President of the Security Council.

We thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

In recent times, we have heard about the issue of water here at the Security Council with enviable regularity. We agree that the issues of access to water resources, their sustainable use, recovery and preservation play an important role because of the timeless importance of water to life, human and economic activity and to maintaining ecosystem balance. As we see it, the discussions and debates on those issues have been valuable and have reaffirmed our understanding that the time has come to move from words to action and to take specific measures that could alleviate the international community's concerns about water. It would be appropriate to turn to the long-standing outputs of specialized bodies, both within the United Nations and outside of it, that day in and day out use statistical and analytical data and the practical experience of interacting with Member States to implement targeted strategies in the area of water resources that take specific political, geographical and other factors into consideration.

There are many solutions on the surface. They include raising the level of social, economic and scientific and technological development of countries, strengthening their potential in the area of water-resource management and extending financial and technical assistance, while bearing in mind specific needs and development strategies. All of those measures, insofar as they apply to water management, are listed as principal ways of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. They open up additional opportunities for further cooperation among States on the issue of water resources, while balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development. The International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028, whose proclamation was supported by more than 100 countries, including Russia, can and should become a platform and a catalyst for the implementation of those measures.

A major source of help in the area of water resource management are regional and international legal documents and mechanisms, such as the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Mekong River Basin Commission and others. In our view, the main issue lies in the fact that the potential of the existing specialized platforms and mechanisms is unjustifiably underestimated and not fully utilized. Instead of guiding countries towards taking mutually acceptable decisions within specialized organizations, we are seeing increasingly frequent attempts to situate transboundary water resources within the context of discussing issues of peace and

security. That could lead to their being regulated pursuant to the top-down principle and could also harm the interests of countries concerned. In that regard, we also recall that water, like other national resources, is a subject of national sovereignty.

With regard to the possibility of using preventive diplomacy on water resources, over the decade of its existence preventive diplomacy has proven to be a good tool for reducing tensions when they arise for specific reasons and for guiding situations along an alternative, peaceful course. The main characteristic of preventive diplomacy, and precisely what makes it so useful, is the fact that it is used exclusively at the request of the State concerned and in line with that State's national strategies. That precludes any automatic recourse to the mechanism and, at the same time, ensures that the sovereignty of the country and its primary right to prevent conflict and overcome its consequences are respected. Therefore, any attempt to dictate under the pretext of preventive assistance could discredit the very idea of so-called preventive diplomacy and result in growing distrust in it on the part of those countries that find themselves a step away from an armed conflict.

**Mr. Klein** (United States of America): I thank you, Sir, for this initiative on security and water, which is a good follow-up after the meeting held last November (see S/PV.7818) under Senegal's presidency.

I too would like to thank the Secretary-General for his insightful briefing.

As we have heard today, growing demand, rampant pollution and changing water conditions contribute to water insecurity in many regions of the world. Water is becoming an increasing factor in migration, civil unrest and State failure. Transboundary water problems are particularly challenging but there are successful models for dealing with them throughout the world. One such example is the growing cooperation among Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia on the Sava River.

Soon after the stability pact for South-Eastern Europe was signed in 1999, those countries began to work together to improve the joint management of the Sava River. With backing from their political leadership and a broad base of support from external partners, cooperation began in 2001 and culminated in the establishment of the International Sava River Basin Commission in 2005. It is one of the first regional agreements put into place after the wars in the Balkans ended. It demonstrated the genuine potential of water to strengthen regional ties. It was a common project on navigation use and conservation that improved people's lives and promoted peace and security.

The United States brings a similar viewpoint to water issues in our own neighbourhood. As we said during the open debate on water, peace and security in November 2016 (see S/PV.7818), for more than 100 years the United States has had close relationships with both our neighbours on water management. The United States, Canada and Mexico have benefited. My country has a long history of supporting cooperation on shared waters. We are a contributor to the Shared Water Partnership, multi-donor group managed by the Stockholm International Water Institute, which Minister Lövin mentioned. The Partnership aims to build political will for cooperation on water worldwide and to support Government-led efforts to solve difficult transboundary water challenges. We strongly encourage other donor countries to support the Shared Waters Partnership, and for countries in need to make use of the Partnership so that it might support their efforts to cooperate on water.

While there is no standard approach to solving disputes related to water, our experience points to four key ingredients for preventive diplomacy to address transboundary water issues. The first ingredient involves increasing the capacity of Member States and stakeholders to better understand and engage on transboundary water challenges. Countries require the ability to negotiate, resolve disputes and implement agreements relating to their water resources. Secondly, there must be sound data to establish a common understanding of the available water resources and the potential benefits and costs of development. All parties in a potential dispute should have the same understanding of what is at stake. Thirdly, it is important to incentivize cooperation through investments in joint projects that demonstrate the benefits of working together. The final and most important ingredient, in our view, is political will. Political leaders should make cooperation a priority, set clear goals and empower technical experts, which is in line with what the Secretary-General outlined in his statement today.

Making progress on how we address transboundary water issues should not be episodic. We need to build on our successes so that countries and their people realize that, whether it is across sectors or across borders, cooperation on water opens up new opportunities for

growth and reduces risks for all of us. I would like to thank you again, Mr. President, for organizing this important debate.

**Mr. Liu Jieyi** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China conveys its deepest condolences to the victims of the terrorist attacks that recently took place in Afghanistan and the United Kingdom. We hope that the injured have a swift recovery. China strongly condemns terrorist acts in all their forms.

China commends Bolivia's initiative to convene this high-level open briefing on preventive diplomacy and transboundary waters. China welcomes President Morales Ayma as he presides over the meeting. We also thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing.

Water is essential for human survival and the sustainable development of economies and societies. Transboundary water resources affect the common interests of river basin countries or countries within the lower or upper reach of river basins. Enhanced transboundary water resource cooperation is conducive to promoting regional security and stability, ecological conservation and sustainable development. I would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, it is important to strengthen development and the protection of transboundary water resources. We must avoid conflicts by utilizing water resources reasonably. Countries in transboundary water basins should bear in mind the importance of safeguarding regional peace and security in the spirit of win-win cooperation through various means, such as improving disaster prevention and increasing agricultural efficiency. We must take an integrated approach towards soundly developing, reasonably allocating, conserving and efficiently using transboundary water resources, with a view to comprehensively enhancing our ability to ensure water security. We must enable the sharing of water resources in order to promote win-win cooperation.

Secondly, enhanced dialogue and consultations among countries in river basins represent effective means of managing transboundary water resources. As parties directly involved in transboundary water issues, countries in river basins should make an effort to build and improve coordination mechanisms. They must step up their communications with respect to transboundary waters, foster mutual trust and deal with disputes in a timely and proper manner. The United Nations and regional organizations should fully respect the wills of the countries concerned. In view of the specific contexts on the ground, they should play a constructive role of promotion. They should help those countries in river basins defuse tensions and build consensus in order to make transboundary water resources a subject of regional cooperation.

Thirdly, we should deepen international cooperation on international water resources and step up capacity-building for developing countries. It is important to strengthen international water resource cooperation arrangements. We must put into place a solid legal framework for transboundary water cooperation. We should further support the United Nations High-level Working Group on Water Resources, the High-level Panel on Water Resources and peace, and other mechanisms in their work, actively provide technical assistance to developing countries and improve water resource management and the sustainable use of water, all with a view to fostering synergy among the international community with respect to water.

Great emphasis should be placed on addressing issues of water shortages in Africa. We should support African countries in cooperating on transboundary water resources and help them build water conservancy infrastructure, all in order to bring concrete benefits to African people. The protection of water resources should be incorporated into the framework of peacebuilding in order to ensure water security in post-conflict situations. Along with the rest of the international community, China stands ready to continue promoting the sustainable development and utilization of water resources so that transboundary waters can serve as pillars of cooperation and peace, thereby making even greater contributions to the prosperity and development of humankind.

**Mr. Yelchenko** (Ukraine): To echo others, I would like to begin on a sad note by extending my sincere condolences to our colleagues from Afghanistan and the United Kingdom, whose countries have once again been the targets of cowardly and senseless terrorist attacks.

At the outset, let me thank the Bolivian presidency for convening the today's meeting on such important topic. The World Economic Forum's *2017 Global Risks Report* ranks water crises as a top-10 global risk. The report links potential water crises to a cluster of environmental risks, notably extreme weather events, failures of climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as to migration and conflicts.

As of today, nearly 1 billion people in the world are in danger of experiencing shortages of food and water. Moreover, 90 per cent of the world's current population live in countries that share rivers, lakes or aquifers with other countries. Those transboundary watercourses are overexploited and vulnerable to pollution. That all serves to underline the fact that transboundary water cooperation is essential for maintaining national, regional and global stability. There is no doubt that many countries and peoples, similar to thousands of years ago, are facing fierce competition over access to water resources. In regions where water is both scarce and in high demand, the problem may trigger a significant decrease in economic growth, leading to uneven distribution of limited water resources, lower living standards, rising unemployment and humanitarian needs. All this may result in forced migration or even cause armed conflicts.

We fully share the view that such current trends clearly require that Governments, the United Nations system, civil society, the private sector and local authorities work together to address holistically and in a comprehensive manner this challenge and mitigate the associated risks.

To achieve this outcome, Ukraine advocates strengthening river basin cooperation and international partnerships with regard to sustainable water management and environmental protection as well as the transfer of affordable technologies on water and energy. We also endorse the developmental approach of acquiring technical knowledge and technological capacity through education and the relevant research activities, particularly in developing countries.

We are convinced that progress in upholding peace and stability in the area of water security also depends on adequate management of the growing demand for resources under the conditions of reduced supply combined with population growth. To minimize the gap between supply and demand in access to fresh water, the international community will require effective security and developmental strategies for resource management and conservation.

We believe that creating effective legal and political frameworks is crucial for preventing conflict and fostering cooperation on transboundary water issues. It is only natural that many, if not all, colleagues around this table referred in their statements to successful examples of regional cooperation in this field.

As a State party to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, or Water Convention, adopted in 1992, Ukraine supports and promotes knowledge- and experience-sharing as regards the water and security nexus.

In this regard, it is also important to note that together with 13 other countries and the European Union, my country is actively working on the sustainable and equitable water management of the Danube river through the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River. That organization has grown into one of the largest and most active international bodies with river-basin management expertise in the world; it is an excellent example of regional water diplomacy.

Another good example is the involvement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in water-related environmental and security issues in Central Asia, a useful tool of preventive diplomacy.

We firmly believe that our desire and will to protect the planet must be translated into action. For this, States Members of the United Nations need to move from declaring their aspirations to taking concrete steps to secure the future we want for present and future generations.

**Mr. Rycroft** (United Kingdom): At the outset, let me thank Council members for their words of condolence and support here and elsewhere following the horrific attack in London this weekend. The perpetrators sought to terrorize us, to divide us, but make no mistake: they will fail. Together we will defeat them, and we will need Security Council unity and activism against this terrible scourge.

Turning to this afternoon's meeting, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing, and I want to join others in paying tribute to you, Your Excellency President Morales, for your leadership in bringing this crucial issue of transboundary water security to the Security Council. It is an issue that we used not to discuss in this Chamber, but it is one that warrants our fullest attention. The stakes are high: more than three quarters of States Members of the United Nations share river basins with another country, and more than 2 billion people live in shared river basins in the developing world.

Sadly, we know what can happen when the water runs dry. In Somalia, drought is driving the acute food shortage that threatens to tip over once again into famine. One powerful lesson from the last famine in Somalia six years ago was that famine is not simply about food but also about water. In north-eastern Nigeria, lack of water is exacerbating the man-made crisis, as we saw for ourselves when we visited in March. Thousands of displaced people, the majority of whom are women and children, have become sick from diseases spread by dirty water and poor hygiene as the conflict continues.

We have to act, and we have agreed to act. Through the global goals, we all committed to deliver improved water security, improved access to drinking water and sanitation, and stronger transboundary water management.

And yet the outlook for 2030 is fragile. We are simply not on track. The United Nations estimates that by the time we are supposed to have achieved Sustainable Development Goal 6, demand for water in many developing countries will outstrip supply by 40 per cent. If such scarcity is combined with weak governance, population growth, migration and climate change, we may face a potential upsurge in global conflicts in future. This, therefore, is a clear call for preventive diplomacy, as so many of my colleagues have already said. All of us in this Chamber have a part to play.

In South Asia, for example, the United Kingdom has provided $30 million towards water governance over the past five years. One billion people across Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal and Pakistan rely heavily on just three rivers, and, despite facing similar problems posed by water demand and climate change, regional collaboration between these countries is limited. That is why we have supported a regional approach to these rivers in order to address the shared challenges of development and climate change. We are working with the World Bank's South Asia Water Initiative, bringing together different disciplines and experiences, technical and political, across the region, so that together we can identify and resolve challenges affecting these transboundary waters.

But to tackle this problem on a global scale, we will need more than bilateral or regional action. We will need to work together, through this institution and others. Holding this meeting is an important step, but this effort needs to be sustained. We cannot solve it through one meeting a year.

The Group of 20 (G-20) also has a role to play, including through incentivizing water cooperation. This is not an issue for just the developing world. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Global Water Partnership estimate that water insecurity costs the global economy $500 billion every year. And yet we fall a long way short of meeting the $198 billion of global investment that is needed every year for water governance and infrastructure. So we need to see investment in institutions and infrastructure to deliver improved water security within States and between States. Building effective institutions and delivering better governance is just as critical as building infrastructure. The G-20 can play a critical role through diplomatic efforts, development cooperation and harnessing the potential of the private sector, Governments and communities to mobilize investment in water security.

Finally, if we are to make progress on this issue before 2030, we need to see the bigger picture. Across the world, climate change is undermining water security. In almost all climate-change scenarios, the world's driest regions become drier, and across the globe flooding will become more common. If we are not taking steps to address climate change, we are fighting with one hand tied behind our back.

The Paris Agreement provides the right global framework for protecting the prosperity and security of future generations while keeping energy affordable and secure for our citizens and businesses. The United Kingdom played a major role in securing the Paris Agreement, and I am proud to restate in this Chamber today that we are wholly committed to it.

**Mr. Rosselli** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for my delegation to be taking the floor at this meeting, which you, Mr. President, have convened.

I would like at the outset to express the solidarity of the people and the Government of Uruguay with our brother peoples and Governments of Afghanistan and the United Kingdom, who have been struck once again by cowardly terrorist attacks.

Mr. President, I would also like to congratulate you on having convened today's meeting and thank you for your statement. We also thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

Historically, transboundary waters have served the development of nations, either as navigational routes for the transport of people and goods or as vectors for the production of energy or the extraction of natural resources, through fishing, for example. Nevertheless, these waters — which down the centuries have united the peoples who share their shores — have on occasion become a source of friction and conflict between them.

Water does not fall within the set of resources defined as a global public good, but is rather a scarce natural resource whose management can stoke political sensitivities at the international level. Water stress is a reality that may well continue to worsen and bring in its wake an exacerbating of existing tensions, resulting in shared river basins and aquifers generating hostility rather than cooperation if appropriate policies are not adopted. In order to understand the sensitive nature of the issue, it should suffice to note that a significant part of the world's population currently lacks access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation.

Governments should adopt a cooperative approach to the peaceful management of transboundary water flows. Uruguay therefore firmly believes in this cooperative approach, which is why we support negotiation as a tool for reach agreements that guarantee the peaceful use of these waters. Accordingly, we are party to treaties that exemplify cooperative management of these waterways.

By way of example, I would point to the border treaty between Uruguay and Brazil of 12 October 1851, and its successor treaties, in which the midline, talweg and joint ownership or basin regimes were established for shared river and lake resources. These treaties set up binational commissions for the management of river and lake resources, such as the Brazilian-Uruguayan Joint Commission for the Development of Mirim Lagoon Basin and the Cuareim River, and more recently, in 2010, the Agreement on River And Lake Transport on the Uruguay-Brazil Waterway.

With respect to the Argentine Republic, through the Uruguay River Treaty of 1961 and the 1973 Treaty concerning the River Plate and its Maritime Front, the borders were settled between both countries and statutes corresponding to the use and management of the waters were promulgated. These legal instruments are the fruit of a pragmatic approach to finding innovative and creative solutions designed to adequately address our respective interests. This approach has led to the establishment of a legal architecture of precise balances and reciprocal concessions. In both, the borders are set forth in meticulous detail based on criteria using the midline or the talweg systems, depending on the section of the river and respecting the way the watercourse winds as it flows, in order to demarcate the islands, thereby arriving at innovative solutions by which some of those islands are under the sovereignty of one or the other of the parties, although physically located on the other side of the borderline.

These instruments define the exclusive jurisdiction of each party and the waters of common use where the navigation channels are located, and provide for the unrestricted freedom of navigation and special norms for channels and for fishing, inter alia. The texts of these treaties also provide for the founding of binational bodies for the administration, oversight and use of the rivers, which led to the establishment, respectively, of the Administrative Commission for the Uruguay River and Administrative Commission for the River Plate, the latter with headquarters on Isla Martín García. This island, which falls under Argentine jurisdiction despite its proximity to Uruguay, is the headquarters of the Administrative Commission and has been declared an exclusive natural reserve for the conservation and preservation of indigenous fauna and flora. Both Commissions adopt decisions by consensus and, using this framework, it has always been possible for agreements to be reached, with the sole exception of a dispute between the two countries that was resolved after being brought before the International Court of Justice.

Pursuant to these agreements, joint monitoring of water quality and navigability of watercourses is carried out and permits for commercial activity and construction for each party are granted, taking into consideration the protection of water resources as the lifeblood of the riparian economy as well as the protection of wildlife and the diversity of local species. It is also important to highlight that in 2010 Uruguay signed the Agreement on the Guaraní Aquifer with Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay in order to promote the conservation of the aquifer, provide environmental protection of the area, and guarantee the multiple, rational, sustainable and equitable use of its water resources.

In terms of transboundary waters, the best form of preventive diplomacy is the one that focuses on strengthening the legal frameworks that regulate them and on setting up the necessary institutional framework

for their management and administration through dialogue and cooperation between the parties.

**Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia): We wish to express solidarity with the United Kingdom and Afghanistan. Of course, the United Kingdom knows that we stand shoulder to shoulder with it during these difficult times.

It is indeed a great opportunity for me to be able to extend a warm welcome to you, Sir, and to thank you for presiding over today's important meeting, and we thank the Bolivian delegation for organizing it. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for his briefing, which, as usual, was very insightful.

Mr. President, water is, as you so eloquently highlighted, a vital natural resource, indispensable to realizing sustainable peace and development. Unfortunately, due to population growth, urbanization, industrialization and climate change, water scarcity is projected to rise. Therefore, in an era of water stress, the way States manage their transboundary waters will be extremely crucial to realizing peace, stability and development.

We are firmly convinced that transboundary rivers and lakes could and should be, as you stressed, Sir, a source of genuine cooperation and partnership between Governments and peoples. Of course, affirming this in theory is by far much easier than carrying out the same in practice. The latter requires overcoming obstacles to a win-win approach that are political, psychological and cultural, as well as other types of impediments that affect the development of realistic partnerships that accord with the reality on the ground.

It is therefore self-evident that the mismanagement of transboundary waters in the ways just indicated could lead to political tension and conflict. This is not naturally ordained by a higher power, however; it is not ineluctable. What is in fact natural and in accord with the interest of all concerned is cooperation, which is facilitated by the natural bond among peoples that transboundary rivers help to engender. But the realization of this in itself requires wisdom, realism and commitment to a spirit of cooperation that brooks no desire to monopolize transboundary water resources.

The colonial history of Africa makes this issue all the more critical. Our strong conviction of the critical importance of cooperation as a more important theme whenever the topic is addressed is borne out of past experiences. History has shown that water can be instrumental in transforming a potentially conflictive situation into one of cooperation and partnership. Creating and building a win-win partnership is indeed possible, as long as States accept that transboundary resources must be used equitably and reasonably. With the right political will, unwavering commitment to continued dialogue to solve disagreements and participatory mechanisms, transboundary rivers create favourable conditions for peace, economic cooperation and regional integration which could benefit all riparian States.

That is why studies demonstrate that, despite the fiery political rhetoric, no State has gone to war specifically over water resources, and there are more examples of cooperation than of conflict, with hundreds of agreements negotiated and signed by States, resulting in productive and well-functioning bilateral and regional mechanisms. It is for these reasons that we remain committed to and actively pursue a path of cooperation in bilateral and regional transboundary water management issues.

Ethiopia strongly believes in the utilization of transboundary waters, including the Nile River, as a source of regional cooperation for shared development. For Ethiopia, the Nile basin is a natural endowment that belongs to all riparian States, which should lead to strengthened friendship and greater understanding. Let me take this opportunity to reaffirm the political commitment of Ethiopia to continuing the regional dialogue with a genuine and lasting commitment to shared prosperity and overcoming poverty. This is also in conformity with the 2030 Agenda, whose major clarion call is leaving no one behind. That is why, in fact, the topic is best addressed by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

All the same, the Nile Basin initiative is an example of cooperation and partnership that we have in our part of the world whose ultimate objective is achieving harmonious utilization of the river. The riparian States negotiated the Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement for almost 13 years and now the Agreement is signed by six riparian States and ratified by three States. It is our sincere hope that once the remaining three riparian States ratify the Agreement, a permanent River Basin Commission will be established.

The cooperation between Ethiopia, Egypt and the Sudan and the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the leaders of the three easterly countries is also

another manifestation of regional cooperation which needs to be enhanced further. No doubt, there are differences between upstream and downstream States of the Nile, but the most important thing is that we have a mechanism for dialogue anchored in the principle of mutual understanding and respect. We believe such bilateral and regional governance mechanisms should be allowed to develop and consolidate within their own regional contexts. Internationalizing these issues will not help; it would instead complicate matters undermining efforts at the bilateral and regional levels.

The 2030 Agenda provides us another historical opportunity to ensure access to clean water for all. The timely and full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the best tool to prevent conflict and ensure inclusive development for all. In this context, enhanced international cooperation would be indispensable to fully implement SDG 6 and other water and water-related Development Goals and Targets in developing countries, particularly in least developed countries.

Ethiopia has been actively and constructively engaged in water dialogues that Member States have undertaken this year in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/222 on the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018—2028, which it co-sponsored. It is such kind of development-oriented dialogues, together with adequate and sustained financial, technological and capacity-building support for the most vulnerable countries, that could bring concrete solutions for the water-stressed world. This is how we all could prevent conflicts and promote durable peace and security.

**Mr. Delattre** (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to express France's deep sympathy for and solidarity with the United Kingdom and Afghanistan in the wake of the terrible attacks that struck London and Kabul.

I would like to thank President Morales for his presence at today's meeting and express our gratitude to the Bolivian presidency for this relevant initiative on the topic of preventive diplomacy and transboundary waters and congratulate it on the high quality of the concept note, which clearly describes the problem we are discussing today. I would like to also thank Senegal, who, in November 2016, had the excellent idea of organizing a debate in the Security Council on the topic of water, peace and security (see S/PV.7818). The discussion that we are having today owes much to this felicitous initiative undertaken by Senegal.

I shall limit myself to three brief observations, which I think are important.

My first comment is that water is a vital resource at the heart of development and human rights, but which also touches on security and peacekeeping. The debate on transboundary waters is essential because it is urgent and legitimate for the Security Council to address these issues.

Access to water and sanitation was recognized as a human right by the United Nations in 2010 in a compromise resolution, which owes a great deal to the efforts undertaken by the Bolivian presidency. Many human activities depend on water resources and, at the same time, global demand for water has grown considerably, which is leading to an increase in pressure being placed on water resources. These tensions will continue to rise in the upcoming decades. The World Bank estimates that, as a result of population growth, the water needed for agriculture is expected to increase by 50 per cent between now and 2050 and water needed for energy production will increase by 85 per cent.

The pressure on water resources has major consequences in terms of security. While environmental factors are rarely the sole cause of conflict, it is undeniable that access to and the use of natural resources can contribute to the outbreak of violence. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, at least 40 per cent of the conflicts that have broken out over the past 60 years are somehow related to natural resources, such as gold, minerals and oil, but also fertile land and water.

Conflicts related to sharing water can arise locally among consumers, as well as among States at a transboundary level. With regard to both surface or underground water, conflicts related to transboundary waters are frequent. They lead to the unequal management of water resources and punish in particular the poorest populations. Upstream countries put significant pressure on downstream countries and too often impose their rules. This then becomes a serious issue of justice.

Water is a real factor of stability and fairness. It therefore deserves our full attention and should not be neglected in the anticipation and settlement of disputes. Too often a source of division, water resources can

and must become a factor for cooperation and peace between States.

My second point is that there are effective international tools that must promote in order to prevent water conflicts. I am of course thinking of the two major multilateral conventions that should guide all our action in this area: the New York Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses and the Helsinki Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. These two conventions are, to my mind, complementary and not rivals.

The Helsinki Convention is, in some respects, more ambitious than the New York Convention. It is mandatory, it covers groundwater and goes further in terms of protecting the environment. It also provides a mechanism for dialogue and arbitration — a veritable tool for facilitating and pacifying water management in the context of tensions between riparian States on the same river, lake or aquifer. I recall that the Convention has been open to all States Members of the United Nations since March 2016.

The principles underlying these two texts are fundamentally similar. They are essentially the principle of reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters, and an undertaking not to cause significant harm to ones neighbours. Both texts also provide a very comprehensive toolkit, detailed and adapted recommendations, and good practices based on long experience. Let us learn to make use of these tools, recommendations and good practices.

I should like to add an important point about the New York and Helsinki texts. These conventions set down key principles but leave much leeway for the parties concerned and do not impinge on the sovereignty of States. I believe that this is a great strength; conflicts are resolved much better on a local or regional basis. We need to promote governance bodies based on river basins, as local parties are best able to assess their needs and discuss the equitable sharing of their waters in order to ensure sustainable and peaceful access to their resources. To that end, we must facilitate dialogue, propose appropriate tools and support cooperative approaches proposed by the parties on the ground but in no case make decisions on their behalf.

My third and last remark is of a more general nature. Climate change exacerbates most environmental issues and makes development issues more complex. Water is no exception. Water resources are becoming increasingly scarce and under increasing pressure due to the combined effect of global warming, population explosion and increasing water demands. The cost of access to the resource will rise and tensions will intensify. Some 90 per cent of natural disasters are related to water. Floods, droughts, storms — these disasters tend to multiply as a result of climate change. These constraints affect the living conditions of human beings; cause or contribute to serious humanitarian crises, such as famine; and give rise to conflicts among neighboring States. Water issues are thus closely linked to the challenge of climate change. It therefore seems to me that in order to prevent water-related conflicts, the challenge of climate change must also be met and, to that end, Paris Agreement on Climate Change must be implemented.

In conclusion, I pay tribute to the Secretary-General, who, with great foresight, has stressed the need to decompartmentalize the approaches to sustainable development, human rights and peace and security. The issue of water illustrates with particular force the concrete imperative of a comprehensive approach. We must anticipate water-related crises, strengthen dialogue and promote the creation of sustainable partnerships by focusing on a long-term vision. There is an urgent need to preserve our water resources so as to preserve our future and that of our children in a peaceful and sustainable environment. This is one of the critical issues of our time, and its importance will only grow in the coming years. France will remaining resolutely committed in that regard.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more speakers on my list, but I should like to take this opportunity to make a further statement.

Some participants today have not enjoyed being addressed as brother or sister, but I wish to tell them that we come from the Earth and shall return to the Earth. We are all children of Mother Earth, and as such we are all siblings. No human being comes from the sun or the moon; we all come from the Earth. That is why I use the terms "brother" and "sister". I apologize if I have upset anyone.

I would also like to say that I have been surprised by various statements concerning cooperation and collaboration. I come from a very humble background. Sometimes, when we hear certain statements from certain countries, we do not feel secure, but having

heard so much talk of cooperation and collaboration, I feel that the Security Council is genuinely concerned about maintaining peace, social justice and security in the world.

Whenever a coup d'état takes place, mistrust arises. As an international Organization, we have the responsibility to defend democratically elected Governments and Presidents. The largest number of coup d'états in Latin America have taken place in Bolivia. When armed troops took control in my country, three Generals became President in one year. I did not wish to discuss the political situation in my country, but I feel that it is a good way to close.

I have been surprised by the various statements on the issue of water, with respect to which we must cooperate and work together in joint projects and investment, which will be of great help to our peoples. I therefore thank all speakers for their important statements. We are very diverse. Listening to speakers experess their opinions in the Security Council, I sense our physical, economic, geographic, ideological and pragmatic diversity. It is our right to be diverse, but whatever differences we may have, I feel that it is important to work together to the benefit of the most neglected peoples of the world.

That is my experience as a person of very humble origins who knows what it means to live in poverty. That is why I believe we must maintain our plurinational States, a plurinational America and a plurinational planet. We are diverse, and we must understand each other in our diversity. For me and many others, the synonym of diversity is plurinationality in which we all enjoy the same rights and duties for the good of society.

*The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.*